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TRUTH IN RELIGION;

OR,

HONESTY IN OUR FAITH AND WORSHIP.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE HEATHEN RELIGION IN ITS POPULAR AND SYMBOLICAL DEVELOPMENT;" OF "THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, AS SET FORTH IN THE BOOK OF CONCORD, CRITICALLY EXAMINED AND ITS FALLACY DEMONSTRATED;" OF "THE TEACHINGS OF PROVIDENCE, OR NEW LESSONS ON OLD SUBJECTS;" OF "THE PARSON ON DANCING AS IT IS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE, AND WAS PRACTICED AMONG THE ANCIENT GREEKS AND ROMANS;" OF "THOUGHTS FOR THE FIRESIDE AND THE SCHOOL," OF "THOUGHTS FOR THE FIRESIDE AND THE SCHOOL, SECOND SERIES;" OF "OLD FAITH AND NEW THOUGHTS," &C., &C.

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1706

"What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do,
This, teach me more than hell to shun,
That, more than heav'n pursue."—POPE.

"He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside."—COWPER.

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DEDICATION.

Not to the Deceitful *Hypocrite*, who wilily feigns to be what he is not; not to the Narrow-Minded *Bigot*, who obstinately refuses a Purer Faith; not to the Contemptible *Wretch*, who meanly crouches to Man, but never bends the Knee to his Maker, but to the *Honest Men and Women*, who: diligently seeking the Truth, are not ashamed or too cowardly, when they have found it, fearlessly to avow and disseminate it, and whose Faith and Worship are, therefore, to be deemed *Sincere*, this Little Volume—which is ever Sacred and, I doubt not, will be ever Dear to them, is respectfully inscribed by their Devoted Friend—

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following pages are solely designed to explain and justify the reprobations and condemnations expressed occasionally in the author's former Works, in reference to the false beliefs and disingenuous conduct of a very numerous, and, alas, still widely dominant class of people among the *so-called* orthodox Christians.

My mission in this world, is God-appointed: it is, therefore, inviolably to be kept sacred, and consists simply in doing my duty, which implies nothing less than ever to seek and cherish *Truth;* never—especially not in matters appertaining to religion, to connive at error or tolerate falsehood with impunity!

In the pursuit of these vital and, indeed, paramount ends—the chief glory of man, and the certain approval of a holy God, it is not for me, or any one else, timidly to weigh or cowardly to shirk, the consequences of the promulgation of opinions more or less antagonistic to the generally received and vulgarly believed articles of faith: *Truth is mighty and must prevail!* Besides, God—the omnipotent, reigns, and, hence, any partial evils that may result from their dissemination, must finally inevitably eventuate in a radical, abiding, and universal creed-

reformation, and consequently in the adoption and propagation of pristine Gospel-principles; that is, reasonable, elevating, sanctifying, common-sense religious beliefs.

My position—both as a man and an author, being thus plainly defined and, therefore, unequivocally placed in its proper light, I shall implicitly commit the issue to the just providence of an all-wise and beneficent Deity. If, nevertheless, people will still continue to trifle with their destiny and obstinately persist in their shameful and glaring disregard of a sincere and genuinely devout conscientiousness in their most serious and solemn relations with the Almighty, and in spite of all the well-meant and repeated efforts that may be put forth by the friends of a purer faith and a worthier worship, in their behoof: thus earnestly admonishing them of their duty, or boldly reminding them of their shameful delinquency toward God and their own consciences, persevere in preferring darkness to light, and fallacies to truth, impiously warring against Heaven and their own happiness—like the rebellious and wicked Titans of classic fame, let them: their disobedience; their dishonesty; their faithlessness, will, sooner or later, overwhelm them with blank dismay in the lively realization of a profound sense of guilt and unworthiness, when each—in the language of Shakespeare, might appropriately exclaim:

> "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain!"

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., May 10, 1881.

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TRUTH IN RELIGION;

OR,

HONESTY IN OUR FAITH AND WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

Man—a Rational Being.

MAN, beside his many other admirable endowments, possesses the rare and exalted faculty of reason, and, hence, is expected always to deport himself reasonably, or—in other words, resolutely to assert the superior rank and dignity which thus pre-eminently distinguish him above all other classes of animated nature, by never losing sight of this important fact, or proving unfaithful to the precious and incomparable trust. These positions, I hold, are self-evident, and, therefore, deserve the serious attention of all who make any pretensions to a religious life.

Such being clearly the case, man should never by ignoring reason, place himself more or less upon a level with the brute, and, hence, commit a

heinous sin, which, by-the-by, the brute cannot do, for the simple reason that it is not, like he, a moral agent. On the contrary, he should ever carefully consult his reason in all that he does, that he may do it reasonably and act emphatically as a man: a human being; that is, in conformity both with his transcendent endowment and, consequently, with the clear and decided will of God: woe to him that slights "the ways of God to man"! How is it possible in view of the foregoing facts, for man to answer to God for his conduct after having been so eminently gifted and blessed with the glorious faculty of reason, if he lives—as, alas, he often does, as if he was devoid of it, or is unfaithful, yes, frequently most treacherous, in the use of it? He is—in such sinister case, according to Jesus, a "wicked and slothful servant," who "hides" this greatest of his *talents in the earth*, and, what is worse still, he cannot—being a free-agent, either justify or extenuate his wickedness. Whence it necessarily follows that God, whose inestimable gift he basely misspends or criminally lets decay, shall, sooner or later, call him to a severe account for his shameful infidelity as well as most flagrant ingratitude, in thus deliberately or thoughtlessly violating this sacred, God-given heritage, and, therefore, most grossly desecrating and insulting the ever adorable *divinity* within him!

Man—I add, is especially to be reasonable and

honest, or—in other words, *true*, to his rational nature in his religious convictions, and—of course, in building up and propagating his dogmatic belief. Under this head, a very numerous part of mankind are conspicuously and largely at fault, and reason is consequently habitually and egregiously abused or lamentably neglected; nay often, alas, decried by those who claim alone to be the true saints and undoubted orthodox worshipers in the spiritual household of God, as if it was an unclean or foul thing, and as if God's choicest blessing to man could not participate in the formation of our creeds: creeds which are a curse and a disgrace unless they are reasonable, without—it seems, contaminating them, and rendering them obnoxious in the sight of God, its beneficent author! Such contracted and despicable views readily account for the many absurd and ridiculous: often utterly false and ridiculous dogmas in church-creeds, and proclaim aloud the guilt and folly and dishonesty of those odious apostates from the divine reason in man, arrogantly calling themselves "the believers." What a perversion of terms in the creed-nomenclature of the Church!

The believers, thus indicated, are really the unbelievers and largely deserve the appellation *infidels:* a term often slanderously applied to those who seek to render their creed plausible and useful by a resort to reason, the only legiti-

mate test of an admissible faith. For they treat lightly, or positively and utterly condemn the God-ordained use of reason as the unequivocally satisfactory and efficient means in determining our religious beliefs. Thus virtually gainsaying their Maker, and setting up a false and most dangerous method of belief. A strange kind of faith, forsooth, that has not reason for its basis, and that does, therefore, rest upon reason-weighed evidence! Can it be possible that man—assuming to be born again of the spirit of God, should be so blindly and obstinately self-willed as deliberately to put himself beyond the pale of a reasonable and, hence, only true and acceptable mode of expressing the natural and uncorrupted instincts of the soul! I solemnly entreat you, fellow-citizens, no longer to trifle with the laws and ways of the Almighty, or further to persist in closing your eyes to your souls' true interest! Away, away, with merely derived or inherited beliefs! God speaks, hear him! Yea, says conscience, *he* speaks!

In the third chapter and the fifteenth verse of the First Epistle of St. Peter, we find a most opportune and admirable lesson on this eminently weighty subject, in the following cogent and appropriate words: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you," &c.

This emphatic and decisive apostolic teaching —fully corroborating the doctrine inculcated in this chapter, should, it seems, suffice to cause even incredulous believers to pause and reflect. Be reasonable then; be honest; be truthful; always ask for a reason before you believe; before you condemn the *reasonable;* the God-obeying, or with all your boasting of possessing *the* saving faith, and of being the *elect of God*, your end will be surely disastrous; for your fancied superior orthodoxy, and modest claim of exclusive childship with God, must finally—if persisted in, prove delusive, and end in shame and sorrow; nay, being the height of unfaithfulness, may, and, I have no doubt, will—sooner or later, be met with the dread denunciation: "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!"

CHAPTER II.

Conscientiousness.

Our sense, or judgment of what is right or wrong, proper for us to do or let undone is—in the usual acceptation, termed *conscience.* Every person of sound mind and of mature years; living in social relations no longer partaking of the extreme savage type of mankind, has a conscience—in most cases, fully adequate to discern his duty; to act properly; and, above all, to know and appreciate truth. He is thus, consequently, capacitated to believe reasonably, or—in other words, not to believe at all unless he has a reason or sufficient cause for so doing, and is, therefore, able to justify and defend his faith on principles of truth and honesty, when—in the familiar language of orthodox creeds, it is, indeed, a *saving faith*, but—as the result of reflection and evidence, simply a *logical faith*, which is quite good enough for ordinary purposes.

What then are we to think of the many thousands and millions of *believers*, who enjoy the distinguished privileges of a high state of civilization, and have, consequently, every op-

portunity of thoroughly informing themselves of what it behooves them to think and to do in their solemn devotional relations to the Deity, or in their religious persuasions and observances as believers; as worshipers; as creed-founders, etc., who never think of sifting their faith, or the evidence on which it rests; of inquiring, more or less closely and anxiously, into its meaning and ethic bearing; into its fitness or truthfulness in its conceptions of God; his laws; and his ways; and especially into its adaptability to the spiritual state and wants as well as the healthful and strictly normal development of the soul.

These kinds of people actually seem to think that any thing will do or is good enough in their creed-relations to God; that if their countenance is only seemingly serious or of pious aspect, and their profession of faith sufficiently zealous and orthodox, it matters little about their real convictions or sentiments—not enough, at any rate, to damage their salvation for the future world; to lay them open to the charge of heresy; or—in other words, to mar their saintly prestige among the *faithful!* Is not such conduct—unfeeling as it is iniquitous, shamefully trifling with the best and most holy interests of the soul? Is it not a flagrant insult to the God that made us? In all the sacrificial modes of worship, practiced among the peoples of antiquity, only the best, the fairest, the most precious, was thought worthy to be

offered to the Deity! Nothing—I repeat, was too good; nothing too costly, for his exalted service, and as an expression of heart-felt and devout gratitude towards him for his manifold bounties and great mercies! And with this instructive and rebuking precedent staring us full in the face, will any persons, claiming to be Christians, still dare to come into the holy presence of God with a faith that is only a sham, and little else, alas, but a pitiable or contemptible superstition: in short, a mere pretense, and often no better than—I grieve to say it, an unmitigated fraud!

Rather, much rather, would I have no faith than a faith that violates the sacred principles of conscience: a bastard faith, and, besides, hug the monster—as, alas, many evidently do, closely and tenderly to my misguided and infatuated soul, falsely deeming it—according to received opinion, the one thing needful: the very *Alpha* and *Omega* of a soul-saving orthodoxy, and—of course, the clearly Heaven-indorsed and only all-sufficient condition to the undoubted attainment of eternal life! Such a faith—neither born nor nursed of the good mother conscience, is absolutely poison to the normal integrity of the soul, and, in fact, poison to all the fountains of a healthy and a rigidly upright and pious life. Hence too a religion or worship founded on such faith; that is, founded not in truth; which is, therefore, devoid of strict honesty, breeds only evil; for

it represses every noble and generous sentiment of the soul, by harboring false principles and acting from base motives, thus virtually causing apostasy from God; from duty; from the essential requisite to a God-appointed destiny — the untiring nurture and observance of conscientiousness, truth and honesty, in all our devotional intercourse with the Almighty.

The following pithy stanza from Crabbe, will appropriately conclude this essay:

"Oh conscience! conscience! man's faithful friend,
Him canst thou comfort, ease, relieve, defend;
But if he will thy friendly checks forego,
Thou art, oh, woe for me! his deadliest foe!"

CHAPTER III.

Religious Creeds should be Spontaneous, or the Result of Personal Reflection.

PRELIMINARY, OR SAVING FAITH.

The ideas which are generally annexed by orthodox believers, to the definition of *saving* faith, as will appear from Buck's "Theological Dictionary," are, that "it is that principle wrought in the heart by the Divine Spirit, whereby we are persuaded that Christ is the Messiah, and possess such a desire and expectation of the blessings he has promised in his Gospel, as engages the mind to fix its dependence on him, and subject itself to him in all the ways of holy obedience, and relying solely on his grace for everlasting life."

From the foregoing exposition of saving faith, in its ultra-orthodox import, it will be perceived that faith is solely, and in a supernatural sense, the gift of Divine grace, and, hence, a miraculous endowment, while man—in his relation to it, is simply in an inert or passive state; a mere machine, responsive only to external agency! Orthodoxy is certainly remarkable for its many crass and extravagant opinions. Opinions, for

example, like those which form the theme of the present reflections, and which—if they were true, would make man's salvation absolutely dependent on a direct and decisive *Divine agency*, thus—the thought is extremely shocking, making God responsible for at least all the persisting unbelief and consequent damnation of the unredeemed within the pale of the Christian Church.

This view of *true* faith, known emphatically as *saving* faith, is essentially Calvinistic, and substantially no less than falsely teaches the dogma of predestination, while—of course, man's free-agency is thrust into the background, or reduced to a mere nominal factor. The origin of this preposterous creed, I will only further add, is the grotesque assumption of the total depravity of mankind through the imputation of Adam's sin! When, O, when! will creed-makers put a little common sense in their articles of faith? Before they represent the whole human race as damned on account of Adam's sin, they should—it seems to me, first be sure that such a person as Adam has really existed, and next look a little into the ancient records of geology, where they shall find that man existed myriad ages prior to the *hypothetical* ancestor of the human family, and that, consequently, Adam's sin, involving all men in guilt and death, is simply a ridiculous myth!

PARAGRAPH I.

Catechumens.

Catechumens are generally young persons, who pass through a course of catechetical instruction preparatory to the rite of confirmation. Having been brought up in the routine of ritual services of one of the many sects, into which the Christian Church is divided, and thus grown familiar with its creed and ceremonies, it is easy to persuade them to do as others have done, and, accordingly, at an age deemed proper for a participation in such a solemnity, they offer themselves as candidates for church-membership. The subjects, which constitute the instruction which they receive, consist in the usual standard orthodox dogmas; as, that Adam and Eve were the first people; that they were primarily perfect, holy, and immortal; that sinning, they became mortal, and transmitted the deleterious consequences of their *fall*, to their innocent posterity, and it thence also became mortal: hence the need of a Savior, possessing both a human and divine nature in one person, to redeem a sinful and perishing world by his passion and death; that saving faith is emphatically a supernatural gift; that baptism is necessary to salvation; that the Lord's Supper has expiatory efficacy;* that

* The belief in the expiatory efficacy of the Lord's Supper, is—at present, perhaps rather tacitly implied than openly avowed in the orthodox creeds.

there is an endless reward awaiting the saved in heaven, and an endless punishment prepared for the lost in hell, &c.

Now all these tenets — I am constrained to say — are either sadly faulty or radically false! This is—I am aware, a bold assertion, but you will please bear in mind, reader, that I make it my especial business in these pages, to tell you the truth at once plainly and unreservedly, without, however, having the least desire unnecessarily to wound even in the smallest degree, the feelings of any sincere, though erroneous believer in Christ. Nevertheless, truth—thrice blessed of God, must have free course, and the eyes of the blind, together with the ears of the deaf, cannot be opened too soon, nor can we hasten too much to restore the halting to a just equilibrium: man needs truth as his greatest ornament and blessing, and his all-wise and omnipotent Maker peremptorily everywhere and always demands it!

It is essentially upon such a creed-basis like the preceding, that the catechumen is admitted to confirmation and church-membership. He readily indorses every article of the inculcated creed in good faith, being neither able to scrutinize it more closely nor feeling uneasy by any misgivings about the truthfulness and cogency of the various parts, composing this widely accredited and eminently orthodox theory of redemption. He takes everything—as a matter of course,

for granted; he yields assent implicitly; and—no doubt, is fully persuaded that he does a great and praiseworthy thing in the name of the Lord!

Alas, poor youth, doomed thus to orthodox theological training! for instead of devoting himself to the service of God on principles of a purely personal conviction, he is entirely governed by hearsay; by example; by authority. His faith is second-rate, nothing more, and he embraces it without the least intelligible appreciation either of its worth or its consistency. Under all these adverse and painful circumstances, he nevertheless never flags or hesitates in his purpose, but solemnly promises, or, perhaps, I should say, asseverates; that is, *swears*, or *affirms*, that by the grace of God, he will *ever* continue in the profession of the creed thus taught him, and thus publicly and advisedly assumed under devout invocations of the Divine blessings and the solemn imposition of hands! Young people—it is clear, are not to be blamed for the part which they are induced to take in this important act of their lives, but—on the contrary, their parents; their pastors; their elders of the faith generally, are gravely reprehensible for making the creed of catechumens—either impliedly or explicitly, *unalterable*, and their church-membership *permanent*. Thus hindering freedom of research, and violating an inalienable human right. Let youths be diligently taught the way in which it may be thought

proper that they should go, but forbear—I beseech you by all that is most holy in human destiny, to meddle with the sacred rights of their consciences: they exclusively concern themselves and their God!

PARAGRAPH II.

The Religious Faith of Christian Adults.

I am happy to know that there are honorable exceptions now and then, but—as a rule, adult Christians generally are seldom much better provided with a reason or rational motive for their faith and religious observances than the unfortunate catechumens, the defective and unsatisfactory character of whose creed and implied conventional future mode of divine service, was briefly described and illustrated in the previous paragraph. They have been brought up in the faith and worship of their ancestors, or, perhaps, in the more recent tenets of their sect, and they believe as they have been taught, thus adopting as undoubted Divine teachings, certain formulas of belief and statedly observing the prescribed outward orthodox expressions of the instinctive and potent religious sentiment. Thus walking in a trammeled routine of ceremonies, and a hoary or, at least, an instilled creed-avowal, without nicely inquiring whether either is reasonable or profitable; whether their ecclesiastical relations might not be materially improved; whether their

ostensibly religious lives are really acceptable to God, and consequently promotive of true happiness, or whether—on the contrary, their religious professions are not decidedly futile; their worship a senseless formality; and their hope vain. Alas, they are usually unconsciously swept along on the tidal wave of orthodoxy without rudder or compass, and, what is greatly worse still, without asking themselves the all-important questions, Whither are we going, and what will become of us!

Of what possible use—to pursue this subject a little further, can religion be unless it is deeply heart-felt? Nevertheless, it being simply heart-felt, though it is going a long way in the right direction to make it a genuine acquisition and an exceeding blessing, it is, by no means, sufficient to enable the worshiper to discharge his entire duty toward God and his conscience. For religion—worthy of the hallowed name, must—above all, be reasonable, or noted for its common-sense traits of character, to be adequately available and deserving of the Divine approval, as well as be sincere, and at once soul-absorbing and exalting. Religion—it deserves to be stated, is a serious as well as a happy and a decidedly genial state of mind, and should—therefore, owing to its superior importance as an essential element in our destiny, occupy the first and highest place in our thoughts and affections. It should,

in brief, constitute a subject of profound study among all who would honor their Maker, and develop their best energies as well as holiest emotions. It is, hence, very evident that religion—"pure and undefiled religion," as the Apostle calls it, must have reason for its basis; truth for its guide; honesty for its test; and the soul and life-amelioration of man for its object: the religious sentiment has been implanted in the human soul more, far more, for man's than for God's sake. In short, though the vulgar religion of unthinking, sensuous mankind may do well enough to amuse its credulous professors for want of something better to satisfy their crude, puerile cravings, it is only the faith and worship whose roots go down deeply into the pure well of truth, and which alone wear jointly the resplendent, jeweled crown, which only spontaneity of thought and impartial personal reflection can give, that has any worth, or beauty, or permanence, or the Divine sanction and blessing.

If—I further remark, any proposition in human life, is clearly self-evident, I think it is that man desires to be happy: this, I hold, is a perfectly natural desire, and all men should, therefore, strive assiduously to attain the end after which it aims in ways at once the most proper and feasible: in fact, the only legitimate ways provided for its attainment. A false religion, which may be a senseless or merely formal religion, could

assuredly never realize this transcendent good. What then can? A true, honest, rational religion! A religion that has sloughed off the thread-bare and polluted habiliments of old superstition; that has carefully and devoutly listened to the sacred voice of God in nature and in conscience, and—piously as well as dutifully, brought its principles and expressions in conformity with its dictates; that never acknowledges the obligation of a creed till it has subjected it to a scrupulous and conscientious investigation; that will rather, a thousand times rather, be decried as heterodox and damnable, than connive at human inventions set up in the place of the honest monitions of the soul, and the irrefragable teachings of Divine providence; and, finally, that will not say it believes when it does not believe, or pretend to be orthodox when it is only truthful, and seeks but to do the will of God and faithfully to discharge its duty. Such a religion, reader, is God-born and will live; will obtain the sanction of all undoubtedly and impartially good men; for it is grounded and thrives in the God-appointed and God-blessed everlasting order of things!

PARAGRAPH III.

The Faith of Clergymen.

Far be it from me to prefer a charge of condemnation against the so-called orthodox clergy indiscriminately: who alone are here alluded to; for there are men among them who—though in their professional capacity, they are committed to the propagation of sadly erroneous and often exceedingly pernicious dogmas, mean well and are perfectly sincere. They simply and implicitly wear the shackles which prejudice and a perverse education have fastened on them; but with these exceptions, the members in connection with ecclesiastical bodies—famous for modestly claiming alone to possess a true and saving faith, and habitually decrying and slandering those whose creed differs from their own, as heretics and reprobates, are largely and notoriously guilty both of a crass and most disgraceful narrow-mindedness and bigotry as well as of cant and hypocrisy: vices which cannot fail to attach an indelible stain to their memory. Ay, "By their fruits," says Jesus, "ye shall know them."

Their presumptuous traits of character already show themselves at the ordination-service of candidates for the ministry, in demanding of them before consecration a solemn promise rigidly to teach and ever faithfully to adhere to the creed of the Church, within whose pale it is designed

that they shall labor in the future, and win or watch over souls for heaven. Such a nefarious act evidently implies a virtual renunciation of the inalienable rights of conscience, and is, therefore, a monstrous crime, wickedly required and unwittingly consented to by the parties interested in this remarkable scene. As a necessary consequence, the ordinand's future growth in religious knowledge, is thus forestalled, while his soul is stunted and debauched for the sake of upholding and perpetuating a ridiculous, effete, and arrogant orthodoxy. To think that there are *Christian* bodies of men who—under pretense of doing God a service, thus violate the inmost sanctuary of the soul, and coolly rob it of its divine birth-right, is enough to make one tremble for the issue of human destiny!*

Suppose now that in process of time, a mem-

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* Froude, in "A Plea for the Free Discussion of Theological Difficulties," says—speaking of creed-subscription, "The man who, in taking orders, signs the Articles and accepts the Prayer-book, does not merely undertake to use the services in the one, and abstain from contradicting to his congregation the doctrines contained in the other; but he is held to promise what no honest man, without presumption, can undertake to promise—that he will continue to think to the end of his life as he thinks when he makes his engagement." I will only add to these weighty words of the distinguished English writer, that young men at their ordination, seldom realize the extent of the mischief that orthodoxy inflicts upon their inexperienced and unsuspicious souls!

ber of such a despotic association begins to have some doubts about the soundness of this or that article of the creed, which he has virtually sworn always to believe or fixedly to abide by, and he, hence, gradually shows signs of infidelity—as conceited bigots mildly designate them, what will be the consequence if he does not speedily retract, and again pursue his path in the beaten, old, and miry rut of orthodoxy? I answer, To reclaim his Satan-insnared soul, the thunders of an "Anathema Maranatha," will be most affectionately and lovingly hurled against his devoted head.

What further result will follow in this tragedy? If the apostate is a coward, he will slink again among the owls and the bats of a twilight Christianity, live self-condemned in the future, and die unregretted and unwept. If, on the contrary, he is a true man: whose faith—figuratively speaking, "can remove mountains," and that has, therefore, the sense and the courage to say with the apostle Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than men," he will defy these odious enemies of religious liberty, peremptorily renounce his existing ecclesiastical relations, and seek a more genial and a more hopeful position in the community: in the name of God, I pronounce this man blessed!

What a striking difference is here manifested in the faith of the two men! In the one case, it is weak, vacillating; in the other, strong, un-

yielding. In the former, it is not honest, and cannot, therefore, be true; in the latter, it is honest and—there can be hardly the shadow of a doubt, but that it is true. Base, worldly considerations make the unfaithful minister a traitor to his conscience; a profound sense of duty exalts the morally-loyal worshiper to the rank of a child of God!

Such marked fearlessness of consequences in the face of difficulties, such unflinching determination to defend the rights of conscience at all hazards, as has been just described, is rare: indeed, exceptional, and multitudes of ministers will rather succumb to the disquietude and upbraidings of an abused and bleeding conscience, than boldly brave public opinion, or run the risk of diminishing the chances of a comfortable living. They, hence, signally fail to carry out the Apostle's exhortation, "To quit themselves like men and be strong." But though they are thus lamentably weak, they are, by no means, so weak as not to be honest. Oh, no! Their infidelity to truth, is, therefore, a crime of a very deep dye, and eminently ruinous to the soul, for it wars against its holiest instincts. Oh, ye who are thus, not without the guilt of a grave misdemeanor, "weak in the faith," let me beseech you to cease any longer: ere it shall be too late to amend your ways, to barter your peace of mind, and hope of heaven for a pitiable "mess of pottage!"

But, finally, what judgment must we pass upon the faith, the religion, or the worship, of the synod, the council, the conference, the presbytery, the convocation, &c., that can thus basely presume to trifle with; thus to abuse; thus to trammel and intellectually murder her more reflecting, more scrupulous members? It is—I conceive, in theory substantially the same as that of the "Holy Office," and they who profess it, are essentially *inquisitors*, lacking only—in this "land of the free and the home of the brave," the fagots of Smithfield, or the blood-stained keys of the papacy! God prosper the faith of honest men, and benignly hasten the time when an all-glorious and thrice holy religion shall prevail in the earth, ever reigning and worshiping "in spirit and in truth!"

CHAPTER IV.

Jesus—Our Ensample.

CHRISTIANS, generally, profess to adhere to a sound and, in fact, eminently evangelical creed, and to pursue their daily walk on the most direct and approved road to heaven; but notwithstanding this strong and seemingly undoubted assurance of a well-founded and finally triumphant faith, it will be—I conceive, not inappropriate in this place, to scrutinize a little closely this confident expectation; for it is notorious that many so-called Christians are but Christians in name, and that they—by no means, come up to their boasted pretensions. Indeed, it will not be difficult to show that their lives must be a good deal corrupt, as they evidently emanate from impure and, hence, insecure principles.

It is a fact familiar to all reflecting minds, that many, nay, the vast majority of them, have positively no strictly *personally* elaborated religion at all. They have never searched diligently after truth; never—it seems, seriously endeavored to develop the religious sentiment on sound ethic and common-sense principles. They are accustomed:

if facts are a true index of conduct, supinely to be borne along on the restless, ever-swelling stream of time, without a thought whether they have a good reason or, indeed, any reason at all, for their faith or their hope, except that it has been handed down to them in the course of a long series of generations, or inculcated by some recent creed-founder, whose dogmas might be, no doubt, very useful, if they were only true, and, therefore, grounded in the Divine ordinations of things. In the playful language of the poet, I confess, it has very little "relish of salvation in't."

It is abundantly evident that under such adverse circumstances, the Christian's conscience must be exceedingly vague; sadly unself-sustained; largely void of conscientiousness; and, therefore, eminently incompetent to be trusted with our destiny or even simply with our well-being. And, with these decidedly untoward facts boldly staring you in the face, will you, who say that you are Christians, still persist in the glaring sin of resisting or disregarding "the ways of God to man," and unfeelingly no less than stupidly spend your precious time and energies in this dreamy half-awake state of thought, which must utterly disqualify you to *give an account of your stewardship?*

When it happens once in a while, that Christians—of the stamp just described, believe aright,

or have by searching found out the truth in all its strength and beauty, they ignominiously suppress it, fearing gainsay, ridicule, persecution; dreading the loss of reputation or the alienation of good will, among base, cowardly traitors to reason, truth, and every principle of a pure and upright life. Here—it will be perceived, it is clearly in vain that we look for a manly spirit; a self-poised integrity of soul; here all, or at least the greater part, is second-rate, and man—orthodox by inheritance or a blind creed-nurture, is, like a listless toying child, "tossed to and fro, and carried about," as the Apostle writes, "with every wind of doctrine," mainly or utterly lacking that steadfastness of purpose and that deep thorough personal conviction, which are absolutely essential to the attainment of a reasonable and a well-grounded faith. Facts in the eventful ministry of Jesus, will throw the needful additional light upon this important subject, and prove—it is to be hoped, instrumental to stimulate nominal Christians into true followers of him, whose genuine disciples they now falsely presume to be.

If now we consult the example of Jesus as a believer and accredited exponent of the character and duties of the Christian, we shall not long be at a loss to decide what—in an ostensibly Christian believer, is genuine or spurious; evangelical or heretical. And it is well that we have some reliable *norma*, or rule, by which to gage

the validity and worth of our faith, and thus to define and illustrate our true religious attitude. For without it, we should ever fluctuate in doubt and misgivings: a most painful state of mind, positively inimical to the indispensable conditions of self-confidence and a permanent tranquillity of soul.

Jesus I, therefore, proceed to observe, appeared among mankind as an independent teacher, who has made up his faith by personal reflection and close scrutiny, and who could, hence, at once realize and assert its reasonableness and its utility. Such an admirable faith—it is clear, inspires the soul with profound trust in the triumph of its cause; equanimity in the midst of trials; invincible fortitude in grappling with difficulties; and an untiring patience in the endurance of calamity. In his intercourse with a rude and bigoted community, Jesus never made the least concessions that might possibly damage the end of his great mission, much less did he ever betray or sully—as, alas, too many of his unworthy followers do, his high trust as "a teacher come from God;" but, on the contrary, he spoke and did, according to the Apostle, "as his Father had taught him." Would to God, that all men would bear in mind that they too have a Father in heaven, and that he expects them likewise to speak and do what *he* bids them. Yes, reader, God speaks to every one of us. Oh, let us hear

him and live! The reader is here briefly referred to a part of the famous "Sermon on the Mount," contained in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, for a brilliant though concise, exemplification of a bold, independent, and conscientious specimen of an honest expression and vindication of the religious sentiment. Strictly in accordance with the spirit and bearing of this heart and mind-amelioration, Jesus—it will be readily perceived, was not slow in applying appropriate and peremptory criticism to the Mosaic laws, decidedly not however from a captious or fault-finding disposition, but solely in response to a rigid obedience of the dictates of truth; for he had come "not to destroy but to fulfill"—to amend, to amplify; to perpetuate and exalt: Jesus was primarily and emphatically the *Reformer* of the Jewish faith and cultus!

But—as the Hebrew prophet writes, "To the law and to the testimony." According to the old Jewish law, murder meant to kill, but in the new Messianic code, anger at a person without a cause, is declared to be a species of homicide; adultery, formerly constituted a violation of the nuptial relation, now—under the reformatory system, the mere lustful desire of a guilty commerce, is made to be tantamount to the same crime; forswearing or perjury was forbidden in the Decalogue, in the Gospel, all kinds of swearing are positively inter-

dicted. Again, retaliation of evil was sanctioned in Jewish ethics, but in those of the evangelical institution, every resistance of evil: clearly only a temporary requirement, is absolutely prohibited; before the advent of Jesus, his countrymen taught love to the neighbor or *chosen people*, and hatred to the enemy: a bigoted formula, illy adapted to a liberal and healthful social relation, which, therefore, categorically as well as wisely reversing, Jesus—animated by a better and more philanthropic spirit, inculcates love to all men indiscriminately,* &c.

Here, reader, are boldness and self-reliance in the face of long-standing and deep-rooted errors and prejudices, but they are the boldness and self-reliance indispensable in behalf of truth. An exhibition of fidelity of this kind, could not but give sore offence to the conceited, narrow-minded, and self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees, who would not fail to instigate the populace: always inconstant of purpose, against the daring, upright emendator of the long-hallowed and firmly-established national law; but the great and single-hearted reformer gave little heed to the impending storm. He had especially come on earth to

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* Love here does not—as is often erroneously supposed, denote affectionate attachment, but generous treatment: to love an enemy with fond regard, is impossible, and would be wrong if it was possible, inasmuch as it would be plainly doing violence to the dictates of conscience.

tell mankind the truth, and, hence, to set them an example of truthfulness, let the Jews and the whole world think and do what they might deem fit: his path was clearly, divinely marked out, and in it he would walk in spite of public opinion; in spite of hallowed usage and iniquitous practices; in spite of all opposition, reviling, persecution; nay, in spite of all orthodox threats of the pains of Gehenna itself!

Jesus, as is reasonable to presume, lay not under any absolute decree or necessity to die, or even to suffer privations and insults so often evoked and so lavishly inflicted, in the course of his eventful ministry; for he might, had he deemed proper, have made common cause with his discontented countrymen, fierce in their invincible hatred against the Romans, and their blind adherence to a formalism eminently superstitious and ineffective; he might—to avoid the cruel fate that awaited him from his inveterate foes, have fled the country; hidden in one of its numerous and spacious caves, famous already in a remoter age; or withdrawn to the cliffs and ravines among the venerable and gigantic cedars of the "goodly mountain Lebanon," &c., but he thought otherwise. His august mission infinitely surpassed every consideration of self-interest in the usual secular acceptation of the term: it was, indeed, sacred; transcendent; divine: ay, it was nothing less than to assert and disseminate the "truth, the

whole truth, and nothing but the truth," let it cost what it would!

Hence too—such being: as we have just learned, his lofty and inexorable principles of duty, it came to pass that the corrupt hierarchy of his infatuated people, who modestly claimed to be the *straightest* of the orthodox school of believers, received no favors in the conduct of his just and impartial ministry. They were "hypocrites;" "false prophets;" "ravening wolves;" a "generation of vipers;" "whited sepulchers;" "blind guides," &c., and the great "teacher come from God," boldly and plainly told them so, regardless of consequences, and unconquerable in his love of truth; in the advocacy of honesty; and in the propagation of a sound, rational, unselfish religion. *Ecce Homo!*

CHAPTER V.

Faith must be a Personal Acquisition.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

MAN being endowed with the faculty of reason, is expected by his Creator to make a diligent and faithful use of it, especially in the nurture of his religious convictions, and the expression of his devotional feelings. To be worthy of its high position, his faith, which underlies his entire *Divine service*, must be largely a personal—in most cases, an *exclusively* personal acquisition; the fruit of individual culture; the result of mature, sincere, in short, honest reflection. Of course, it is also proper to acquaint ourselves with the religious opinions and practices of wise and good men on this eminently important subject, and, besides, to listen respectfully to all well-meant and kindly offered advice of friends, who are entitled to our esteem, or to affectionate relatives, who are united to us by the tenderest ties of which our nature is susceptible; but further it would hardly be safe to invoke extraneous influences. For beside and beyond any benefit that might accrue to us from these and similar sources of religious information,

it is pre-eminently *autopisty*, or—according to Webster, the "internal worthiness of belief; the quality of credibility existing in itself, independently of external circumstances," which must be indefatigably adhered to, and unflinchingly carried out. Hence it follows that neither the creed of parents; of ancestors; of ecclesiastical bodies; or of orthodox believers generally, must be allowed to decide or to shape our faith, and consequently our relations and duties to the Deity: such impertinent interference would be glaringly sacrilegious; nay, damnable!

PARAGRAPH I.

Faith is not a Chattel and cannot be bequeathed to us by our Parents.

It is a great mistake to think that faith can be provided for children as raiment, food, or shelter is provided for them. In order to possess these necessaries, nothing more is needed than simply a passive deportment: free-agency in such case, is unessential. On the contrary, faith is a spiritual attainment, premising effort and the exercise of free-will, and can be, therefore, only normal when it is the product of deep, close personal reflections. Not less erroneous or false is the notion—alas, too commonly entertained, that children must believe as their parents believe, and that the latter do rightly not only to indoctrinate them in the distinctive traits of their faith, but, tacitly or formally, permanently to obligate them to its

observance: an effectual device to perpetuate sectism! Such absurd dealing with the young, is grossly suicidal of personal liberty; making inert, abject slaves of those who are naturally born free; and degrading faith to the nature of a chattel!

Parents should beware how they tamper with the precious and enviable birthright of their children—the right of a personally or—in other words, spontaneously, developed faith: a faith for which labor has been bestowed, deep and anxious thought has been spent, and for which, very probably, personal reproach and insult have been heroically and confidently endured. Their conduct in interfering with adult-rights of the soul, is eminently destructive of all reasonable worship, all true religion, and, hence, extremely reprehensible; for they virtually train up their children to a dead, sinless, and disgraceful formalism; nay, to a mockery of religion: a spectacle most odious and disreputable, thus completely disqualifying them for the attainment of a correct, tenable conception of the real import and proper tendency of genuine religion, or the just appreciation of a strictly honest and conscientious worship of God. In fact, the tendency of this—no doubt well-meant, but decidedly nefarious guardianship, is to make spiritual cripples of their children, and they, hence, send them—thinking of doing God a service, "maimed, halt, and blind,"

into the very "holy of holies," of the temple of God: *as they believe!*

I am far from teaching or wishing that parents should neglect the religious education of their children, or suffer them to grow up without any faith or creed at all, but what I insist on, is, that all instruction in this regard, should be merely provisional, and subject to future revision, amendment, addition, curtailment, or rejection altogether, as shall be deemed expedient. Indeed, parents are under solemn obligation—to the best of their ability, to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and though they should teach them falsely or instill principles into their minds, absolutely hurtful to sound, religious training, or the practice of wholesome, rational devotion, they are to be held excusable, even in case of so disastrous a result of their teaching, having done the best—under the circumstances, they have been able to do. But to attempt to forestall the possibility of a better, truer creed, and a more advanced and improved mode of Divine worship, is criminally ignoring or positively repudiating God's ways of educating and ameliorating mankind; is robbing children of their inherent rights; and fatally vitiating the noblest, highest aspirations of the soul!

PARAGRAPH II.

The Faith of Our Ancestors should not Influence us in the Choice of Our Religion.

A knowledge of comparative theology, acquaints us with the interesting and highly instructive fact, that there exist an exceedingly great number of religious creeds among the different races of mankind. A proof that—at least among civilized nations, there have been always independent and fearless thinkers on religious subjects, and that ancestral beliefs have, by no means, invariably influenced—much less decided, the faith and worship of posterity. This striking propensity in man to devise and build up new and better religious institutions, and to give ear to the utterances of an advanced and more sensitive conscience, completely verifies the idea that it is radically inherent in the constitution and instincts of human nature, and that it is, hence, a necessary phenomenon in human progress, especially in its psychical, or mental phase; that it is evidently a Divine provision; that to cultivate it is, therefore, not only right but a sacred duty; and that, consequently, a diversity of religious opinions is a perfectly normal and unavoidable as well as indispensable element in the development of our spiritual growth, and has thus, most undoubtedly, the entire and emphatic sanction of the Creator.

Why then, such being the case, is there so much fault found with dissenters from existing religious organizations; their motives impudently questioned; or their opinions rudely denounced? Evidently because their conscientious convictions urge them into channels of faith and worship, differing from those which time and prejudice have consecrated as saving Shibboleths, they are lustily decried as infidels, apostates, nay, as wretches, who—Uzzah-like, impiously presume to touch old orthodoxy, modestly deemed holy as a second *ark* of God! Among such dissenters and founders of new sects or religious institutions, may briefly be enumerated, as instances in point, in more recent times, such men as Waldus, Wickliffe, Luther, Zwinglius, Calvin,* Knox, Roger Williams, Wesley, &c., beside many others both in heathen and Christian countries. Such an exclusive and wicked mode of thought, must seem very strange to a liberal and magnanimous mind, and illy accord with the generally entertained ideas of the founders of the Protestant Church, who—though they are denounced and execrated by Roman Catholics as vile and godless innovators and despisers of dear, venerable orthodox forms of faith—now, alas,

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* Guilty, certainly, of a most atrocious deed, in instigating —on account of *diversity* of faith! the horrid death of Servelus.

grown somewhat musty from age and want of a proper airing, are, nevertheless, held in great esteem among the different Protestant denominations. They all consider them worthy and good men, never—it seems, realizing the startling fact, that they too come under the category of dissenters, and are, therefore, no less infidels and apostates than those usually misnamed such, inasmuch as they too, as well as the *heretical* professors of religion: whose creeds have not attained to the distinction of a separate ecclesiastical foundation, are deserters from hoary, deep-rooted ancestral confessions of faith. Yes, reader, Luther—according to the bigot's ridiculous nomenclature, was an infidel, a heretic, a very Belial of impiety and black ingratitude, and such Satanic brood were, of course, all the Reformers, in all ages and among all peoples, without exception and without redemption!

In the face of these eminently salient facts, touching the present weighty question, it is surprising with what wonderful tenacity—for example, Lutherans, German Reformed, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, &c., will persist in maintaining their old, hereditary, now and then a little threadbare creed-connections, as if there was a necessarily saving virtue in such connection; a special honor; a sure passport to heaven. Do these credulous, silly men-worshipers nôt perceive that—while they

dread to set up an independent religion according to their real convictions and deep yearnings, and thus do like their adored heresiarchs did when they forsook the long-cherished and hallowed faith of their fathers, and inaugurated new creeds and forms of worship, they stupidly indorse in others what, in their case, they deem a heinous sin, a certain falling away from the only hope and guarantee of salvation?

Such timid Christians—to say the least, are contemptible cowards, who dare not do what conscience bids them to do; what God says do; what their honor, their happiness, their peace of mind, their hope of heaven, bid them imperatively to do. Their leaders of the Protestant faith, broke away without hesitation or nice balancing of consequences, from error, oppression, credulity, in short, from a false faith and corrupt cultus, valuing their souls more dearly than the continued favor or smiles of the ancestral church, but they foolishly persevere in their ungenial and irksome relations, in spite of the rebukes of a wounded and abused conscience, instead of resolutely treading in their footsteps and shaking off as no longer endurable, what—in the language of the Apostle, they cannot persist in believing as *true*, or *honest*, or of *good report*, they virtually continue with their arms folded, their eyes averted, and their lips closed, to rock themselves in the rickety cradle of the old orthodox nursery

of their childhood, now illy adapted to lull souls distracted with doubts, and anxiously looking for more light and a better hope, as well as profoundly sensible—though they dare not avow it, that "he who never changed an opinion, never corrected any of his errors." *

Let us now suppose a church-member to manifiest dissatisfaction with his ecclesiastical relation, and betray an inclination or openly avow a wish to join another religious denomination, there will be immediately expressions of regret, or symptoms of surprise and astonishment. "What—the inquiry is, will such a one, who has always been your warm friend, and never doubted your Christian zeal, say, when he hears of the threatened defection? Your family—known to the whole congregation for its staunch orthodoxy, must, my dear sir, be almost overwhelmed with anxiety and shame at so sad an incident; indeed, all the faithful, in whose orthodox bosom you have been nursed so long, and whose faith and hopes you have once so happily shared, feel as if their hearts should break at the thought of so distressing a fatality. Oh, be dissuaded from your fell purpose. By the sacred memory of a close and intimate friendship, let me entreat you to stay and to be content in a connection in which so many have lived

* American Phrenological Journal, and Life Illustrated.

hopefully and died in peace: if salvation is not with us, where will you find it? Our faith—I assure you on the basis of our good old creed, is 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' and is: I feel fully persuaded, the only pure and really evangelical, or tenable faith. Oh, be advised; believe implicitly as you have been taught, never doubting, and all will be well!" He is won back into the fold; walks again in the old ruts of tradition; and—with a deep sense of shame and self-abasement, is miserable the rest of his life!

PARAGRAPH III.

Ecclesiastical Bodies must not be allowed to dictate or control our Faith.

Ecclesiastical bodies—considered in the light of Christian institutions, are primarily designed to teach and disseminate the religion, which the congregations or pastorates, existing within the bounds of their organizations, distinctly and emphatically recognize as their creed. This creed may be ever so false or unreasonable, as long as the people, whose approval it has, are satisfied with it, they are under evident obligation faithfully to adhere to it, or else—animated by sounder views, seek more promising fields of labor; for they have no right, and must, therefore, not be allowed to dictate or control the faith of any religious body, not even of "their own members." The reason is plain, inasmuch as faith must be a

free, personal acquisition, without, rude extraneous human interference, otherwise it is really no faith at all, but only the result of training, imbuing, in short, merely a dull, insensate conventionalism, essentially worthless to the furtherance of a higher soul-development as well as a more intellectual and truthful communion with God.

As far as my experience goes, I am warranted in saying that most clergymen have but very vague and incorrect ideas of the nature of true faith, since they are, seemingly, at least, too often, alas, satisfied with second-hand creeds, as the recognized, sole exponents of their faith. Permit me, gentlemen, to state to you: who presume—in the name of the Lord, to bear "the crook," and to feed "the flock" of the gospel-fold, that faith is decidedly *inductive* in its origin, that—resting upon adequate evidence, it rejects speculation; that it is normally and eminently a common-sense product; and that, hence, it only—being the result of a deep, sincere personal research, is to be deemed legitimate and available in the sight of God. Think not, then, that you can impart it and stamp it as genuine. All that you can do toward its attainment, is to call attention to it; to give your opinion about it; to suggest its adoption, &c.; nothing more! For every one of us, as he may hope to stand at the bar of God, unrebuked and uncondemned, must have—as I have already shown, an *auto-*

pistic; that is, an intrinsic, strictly personally elaborated faith: a faith that is his own: as the child is the offspring of the parent. This species of faith—not the ceremonial parade of an entailed pretense under that name, is positively, permit me further to tell you, the only effective, saving, God-indorsed faith, and this alone—among all the myriad creeds of mankind, will stand the fiery ordeal of "the last day;" for it alone will be "erectus ad sidera"!

The instant, therefore, a minister of the Gospel undertakes to dictate or control the faith of any person, and demands that it shall be deemed final and immutable—as he has inculcated it, he must be peremptorily resisted and disowned as a base inquisitor, and a deadly enemy to the inborn, inalienable rights of man. It is time to learn and carefully to lay to heart the paramount fact, that our admirable republican institutions guarantee to the people of the United States, *liberty of conscience:* a free and untrammeled making up and profession of their faith; and that any interference or trifling with this most precious guarantee, is at once a crime against the Republic and a sacrilege against God! By all that is deemed sacred and holy among men, I, therefore, beseech you always to respect and profoundly to cherish that inestimable blessing—the inviolable right to the undisputed enjoyment of our conscientious convictions. "Who"—I add finally, exclaims the apostle of

the gentiles, "art thou that judgest another man's servant. To his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand"!

It may be proper too, in this place, to state concisely, but in plain and lucid language, that man must enjoy freedom of will, and possess the power of a spontaneous origination of his faith, otherwise, it is clear, he will not be answerable for his religious attitude toward God; for the profession of an imposed, blind faith, is absolutely tantamount to a practical renunciation of all sound and useful moral principles: it is simply a chattel, and infallibly involves the vitiation and degradation of the intellect: the pride and glory of man. Behold, what an abject *thing* a man is when his religion is devoid of ratiocination; his faith shorn of spontaneity; and his ritual observances a senseless fetichism—a mockery! Prepare for a solemn reckoning, ye willfully-blind guides; ye, who, without scruple, "lord it over God's heritage;" ye, who presume to arrogate to yourselves the place of God in the souls of his children! *Satis est.*

PARAGRAPH IV.

Orthodox Believers, who constitute a Vast Majority in the Christian Church, must not rule in Matters of Faith; for Reason only, not Numbers, can decide in such Case.

The history of dogmatics, or—in other words, of doctrinal theology, shows plainly that majori-

ties are decidedly the creed-makers in the Christian Church. This majority-reign in religion, has proved a blight and a stain to the good name and ready dissemination of the Gospel. For nothing can be conceived to be more absurd and wicked than the reference of our faith to a plurality of voices, as it is clear from the character of many that are included in it, that if it could be weighed instead of counted, it would often be found to be greatly in the minority. Besides, in many instances, a careful and impartial criticism must unhesitatingly reject and condemn it as the undoubted betrayal of an unholy ambition as well as a most contemptible and dangerous fanaticism. The idea, that a person's faith—the highest ethic achievement of the soul, should be submitted to *vote*, and conscience be made the plaything of accident, intrigue, or sacerdotal tyranny, is extremely shocking to the reflecting and unsophisticated mind, as it indicates a shameful and wicked infraction of personal rights, and—of course, a high-handed wrong, which is no longer patiently to be borne, and which cries aloud in stern thunder-tones for a speedy and a thorough correction. "I cannot," says Luther, "submit my faith either to the Pope or to the Councils, because it is as clear as noonday that they have often fallen into error, and even into glaring inconsistency with themselves," &c.*

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* D'Aubigne's "Reformation in Germany and Switzerland."

Professedly orthodox believers, generally, have really no faith at all—"earned in the sweat of the face," and, hence, no genuine faith to bestow upon the rest of mankind, as theirs is clearly only derived or impost, not the indispensable sequence —as it should be, of a careful and diligent personal elaboration: it has no logic to point to, and is, therefore, only a sorry *abortion* of the religious sentiment. Whence it follows, that the deluded possessors of such spurious and vain faith, which is purely only mechanical in its nature, and well adapted to promote an inert, passive state of mind, are altogether unable to give a satisfactory account of it, not having investigated either its spirit, its origin, or its tendency. Nevertheless, all men are explicitly or impliedly required to believe the received orthodox creeds; to subscribe the Shibboleth of the many; and—in default of prompt compliance, they are certain to be slandered, abused, and insulted with all kinds of reproachful and savage epithets. Is this a specimen of the boasted charity and Christian toleration of orthodox believers? Is this the spirit that should animate the followers of the "meek and lowly" Jesus? Fie, for shame, hide your guilty heads, ye modern Sauls, full of the ignoble spirit of persecution, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the *disciples* of the Lord"!

The founders of Christianity were not governed —I am happy to say, by this widely accepted, in-

solent majority-rule in the dominant Christian Church, otherwise they would never have excited the enmity and alarmed the fears of the bigoted Jews, or been doomed to endure manifold persecutions and cruel deaths, on account of their apostasy from the faith and the cultus of their fathers. The same remarks hold good in their application to the *Reformers*, and founders of Protestantism, in the sixteenth century, who would have remained good, devout, and—of course, illiberal Roman Catholics, if they had continued blindly to yield their consciences to the decisions and prestige of "Holy Mother Church." But guided by a lofty, manly spirit, and honest principles, they seceded from their unsavory ecclesiastical connection, and boldly, yet in the fear of God, set up a creed and form of worship of their own making; and which—though far from being faultless, or an unexceptional solution of the *soterial* problem, was, doubtless, sincere, and they could, therefore, justly point to it, and say "it is *our work;* we will stand by it." If—I will merely add, a creed is good, God will be sure to own and bless it, if bad, or false, he will not fail to withhold his favor, and it will finally inevitably make room for a better, because more truthful and common-sense one!

A little well-meant and pertinent advice may probably not be amiss here, to those Christians, who happen to live within the bounds of the or-

thodox Churches, and who—having misgivings that their faith is more heretical than evangelical, yearn for an improved and more genial creed, but who, alas, from worldly or social considerations, are loth to break away from the old religious surroundings, thus unhappily proving false to their better and truer convictions! Think for a moment, I pray you, what you are doing. God sees, knows you, and in what light do you suppose you will appear to him, the *Searcher of Hearts?* In the light of unfaithful, heartless men and women, who value a base, time-serving profession of religion more than obedience to their God, and devotion to their duty! Arise, "stand fast in the faith: grounded in higher aspirations and 'a hope that maketh not ashamed;' quit you like men; be strong"!

A stanza from the poem: "Der alte Landmann," by Hölte, one among many of Germany's distinguished poets, will—on account of its singular appropriateness to verify and illustrate the last subdivision of this paragraph, close this brief dissertation:

"Ueb' immer Treu' und Redlichkeit
Bis an dein kühles Grab,
Und weiche keinen Fingerbreit
Von Gottes Wegen ab!
Dann wirst du: wie auf grünen Au'n,
Durch's Pilgerleben gehn;
Dann kannst du sonder Furcht und Grau'n
Dem Tod in's Antlitz sehn."

CHAPTER VI.

Martyrs to Religious Convictions, have left us an Example, Worthy of our Highest Regard.

MARTYRS—in the grand and interesting cause of religion, have played an important, indeed, a *normative* part in the history of the world, though their numbers: compared with the rest of mankind, have always been small. Small however as they have been, they have done extremely good service in behoof of truth and righteousness, especially in asserting the inestimable rights of conscience, and thus vindicating the cardinal principle, which underlies all true and feasible ideas of faith and Divine worship—the ideas that every person, capable of a proper exercise of reason, must be freely and unconditionally permitted to frame a religious creed agreeably to the plain dictates of his conscience, without interference or gainsay from any one; for the cause is eminently sacred, and in the furtherance of it: so weighty in itself, and positively essential to the highest interests of our race, the earnest, honest, truth-seeking believer will not hesitate to defy ignominy and to brave even death itself!

A martyr, in the Christian acceptation of the word, is—according to Webster, "One who, by his death bears witness to the truth of the Gospel." Though—in itself, this definition is unexceptionable, it is too narrow to embrace the limits of the present subject, and I shall, therefore, so far deviate from it as to designate a martyr as one, who dies in vindication of his religious convictions, and, consequently, in illustration, as well as to the enhancement of his faith. Christian martyrs—it is evident, died in glorification of the Gospel; died as Christians for a religion which they thought to be the only true and saving one; but all other systems of religion have likewise had their martyrs: their witnesses to the truth, enforced by the clear voice of conscience, and sanctified as well as exalted by unswerving trust in Divine approval, who believed their creeds and liturgic observances of heavenly origin, and soterial in their efficacy. Whence it happened that they too hesitated not to die in defence of them, rather than cower before the infatuated persecutor, or meanly apostatize from "the faith once delivered to the saints."

As far as the principle of martyrdom alone is involved, it matters not whether the martyr suffers and dies for a true religion and a sound faith, or for a delusion, a phantom: it is enough if he has the honest, unfaltering conviction that he offers himself a sacrifice in the sacred cause of right-

eousness as he understands, or can appreciate it. Whence it follows that—with the best intentions, the zealous martyr may and, no doubt, often does, give eclat to a fallacy instead of to a truth. I have, hence, no hesitancy in believing that many even among the early Christian martyrs: whom—at first blush, we might suppose the most exempt from error and visionary hope, died under false impressions and extravagant anticipations, thinking, for example, among other hallucinations, that the second advent of Christ was imminent, and that, consequently, they should sustain but small detriment in dying for the sake of him, who would most undoubtedly speedily reappear, according to the prevailing *chiliastic* belief of the primitive Christians: inherited from their conceited Jewish ancestors, and establish his glorious and thrice beatific kingdom upon the earth, in which "the wicked would cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest." This flattering and emphatically inspiring expectation—which constituted a leading article of faith in the infantile Church, and powerfully encouraged the spirit of martyrdom, was—I regret to say, never realized, and, therefore, though it was fallacious, and—so far an evil and misleading, the principle which actuated the martyr, was unexceptional, and, accordingly, needs no justification.

Some of the theses in the foregoing arguments, may, probably, be charged with the advocacy of

selfish motives, or utilitarian principles, as the ulterior end in human conduct. To which it may be replied, that all human conduct, guided by moral considerations, must necessarily spring from motives, and that—of course, the motives are the cause of conduct, or the reason of willing. But no body of sound mind and possessing free-agency, can possibly resolve to act for bad ends, or without any ends at all. Hence he seeks a good or an advantage in all that he does, and would be exceedingly foolish to act otherwise, or without a regard to final results. What the ancient Stoics and other philosophers since their days, have taught, that "virtue is its own reward," is readily conceded as true; but then, it is the *reward*, the *good*, that is the end of virtuous action, and, without gain of some kind, it would be useless, and—in fact, in a moral point of view, impossible to act at all!

Common sense as well as equal right, tells us that however firmly we may be persuaded that our faith is true, nay, that it is truer than any other, or in other words, the only really true faith that exists, we have no right to force its acceptance upon any one. Creeds, which have their origin in coercion, are intrinsically useless as a means of a true and healthful soul-growth, and are an evident and grossly flagitious encroachment upon the personal rights and free-agency of our fellow-beings. Nor, on the other hand, is it

proper or ethically lawful for any one to oppose or hinder the peaceful propagation of religious opinions. Should, therefore, such an attempt be made, common prudence as well as natural justice, dictates retaliation: not in a spirit of revenge, but for the laudable purpose of vindicating an inalienable right. Thus—to illustrate a case in point, Mohammed: the founder of a religious creed, professed by one-third of the human race, being confronted in military array by the tribes of his country, who were still wedded to their ancient superstitions, and—of course, violently opposed to his innovations in the orthodox faith, in turn seized the sword—as was his imperative duty upon the occasion, nor again sheathed it, till he and his followers—technically called *Mussulmans*, had subdued the enemy, and secured the triumph of *Islamism:* "There is one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet." When subsequently, Mohammed carried his victorious arms into foreign countries, and—at the point of his trusty blade, claimed submission, tribute, or faith in the Koran, he sinned most grievously against the hallowed principles of equal rights, and is, hence, justly held amenable to the severe censures of posterity. A great man, too may err; for "to err," we are told, "is human;" but when he commits a grave error upon the momentous subject of religion, and—instead of commending it to the approval of mankind by

its intrinsic worth, he makes his proselytes, not by suasion, but by conquest, every friend of true religion—now profoundly mortified, might well cry out: "*Ichabod*—her "glory is departed"!

Martyrs—it is to be hoped, have not lived, or suffered and died in vain. Their example—which falls under the category of extraordinary events, is, therefore, to be accounted among the rare and salient feats of human heroism, and is precious as it is rare: plainly deserving to be classed with the brightest specimens of moral grandeur, worthy no less of our imitation than of our hearty approval. For if any good or blessing is sufficiently valuable to be purchased at the cost of life—the sweetest enjoyment and dearest gift of God, in this richly endowed and wonderfully diversified mundane sphere, it is the religious sentiment: true or—upon mature, candid reflection, and devout communing with God, *held* to be true; for conscientious conviction that *it is true*, is enough to stamp martyrdom with the Divine sanction, and give it a niche—radiant in undying luster, in the hearts of all honest men!

Finally, I entertain not the least doubt, that—in the gospel of St. John, Jesus mainly calls himself "the way, and the truth, and the life," because by the exercise of the splendid virtues, implied by these epithets, in his martyr-death, he leads believers to *the Father*. A death which—beyond all cavil, demonstrates in the clearest

and most triumphant manner, his intense love of truth as well as his invincible adherence to his religious convictions. Such a way—as the one here pointed out: the way of unflinchingly asserting the rights of conscience amid the pains of death and the mockeries of formalism, is the duty that truth claims in a last emergency and the crowning act of its followers. Such is heaven, thus sought and found! Hell, what is *it?* In his "Night Thoughts," Young thus answers the question:

> "For, what, my small philosopher!* is hell?
> 'Tis nothing, but full knowledge of the truth,
> When truth, resisted long, is sworn our foe;
> And calls eternity to do her right!"

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* Lorenzo, the poet's interlocutor.

CHAPTER VII.

The justice and goodness of God exemplify True Belief.

In singling out, in this place, the justice and goodness of God, as normative of a true faith, I wish—by no means, to convey the idea, that they are more admirable or holy, and, therefore, more worthy our devout and earnest attention, than any other of the adorable Divine attributes, but that I give them preference simply for the reason that they are generally more intelligible, and, hence, especially adapted to be introduced here to the reader's notice, as long familiar and readily appreciable forms of God's method of dealing with mankind. Besides, the nature and significance of these attributes do not entirely transcend our capacity to comprehend what is right and good, but emphatically come within the sphere of our daily lives and most sacred duties.

The justice of God, according to Bretschneider, a learned German theologian and eminent writer on dogmatics in the last century, is defined as "the attribute, agreeably to which, God prescribes laws to his rational creatures: the obedience to which, he rewards, while the disobedience to

them, he punishes." Examples will further verify and illustrate these simple—in fact, common-sense propositions.

The industrious, prudent person, who—for example, diligently cultivates the earth; plants and sows at the appointed times; wisely rears the useful herb and tree; husbands, with care and forethought, the abundant resources, which the Creator has kindly placed at his disposal; and thus dutifully co-operates with the rains and sunshines, the dews and the breezes of heaven, has a harvest to reap, plenty of bread to eat, and a conscience to smile upon his efforts; whereas the sluggard, despising or, at least shunning, honest labor, and thus wasting his precious time in idleness, and contempt of a primary law of our being, has want, lives in wretchedness, and dies branded with ignominy, and loathed as a vile thing. Behold the scrupulous equity of the Divine justice, awarding blessings and pleasures to the deserving, the submissive to "the ways of God to man;" but poverty and suffering and infamy to the unworthy—a rebel against the plain laws and interests of his destiny. Thus—as an English author pertinently remarks, "Virtue and vice have a natural ordination to the happiness and misery of life respectively."

Again, the sensible, economical possessor of this world's goods, will so apply his stores as to do good both to himself and others, without waste

or extravagant indulgence. He considers himself very properly as God's steward, and seeks—as much as possible, to administer his high and responsible office in strict conformity to the dictates of duty and the hallowed principles of justice: he is a fellow-worker with God, and prospers; not thus deports himself the prodigal, who *wastes* "the portion of goods that have fallen to him," *with riotous living:* the justice of Heaven soon overtakes him; he suffers extreme want; is spurned by all good men; and doomed to sink into abject and squalid poverty! A part of the first Psalm, will enable the reader to trace the source of the success and prosperity of the one, while a *part* likewise of the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, will explain and justify the ill luck and sad disasters, which befell the other.

These instances, in proof of the mode and unfailing certainty, which characterize the administration of Divine justice among mankind, are indeed but few as well as concisely stated; yet this will not be considered to be strange, when it is observed that the object of this disquisition is, not to be exhaustive, but simply illustrative, giving the reader a proper idea of the subject, and enabling him to form a just estimate of its importance. The great truth to be thoroughly impressed upon the mind here, is, that virtue is infallibly rewarded, not punished; while, on the

other hand, vice is just as inevitably punished, not rewarded!

If now we advert to the attribute of God, denominated his goodness, we find the following definition given of it, by the same eminent authority just quoted: "The goodness of God—also called *grace* in its more extended acceptation," says he, "is that Divine attribute, according to which God confers as much happiness upon his sentient creatures as—in accordance with their natures and cosmic relations, they are capable of enjoying." This view of the subject, is no less distinct and readily understood than it is clearly and concisely expressed, and unmistakably announces the fact, that God is good, and that the proof of it is patent in the beneficent manner, in which he has endowed his sentient creature: the end of the endowment being: the inference is inevitable at sight, the *happiness*, not the misery, or even blank contentment, of his creatures!

As far as the science of zoology has been explored with sufficient care and success, there has never yet a creature been found, no matter how low or how high in the scale of animated nature its rank might be, whose organization, instincts, and habits: rare abnormal cases excepted, do not furnish most decisive proof of beneficent design in the Creator, and, consequently, undoubted signs of enjoyment in the creature: everywhere

a voice resounds, "God is good! he bestows life to bestow blessings!" Man too—of course: as the most consummate specimen of created perfection known to us, is happy in his sentient existence, and—such is the intensity of his sense of wellbeing, as the consequence of the admirable structure as well as exquisite functions of his wonderful organism, that—though his path in life is often rugged, and beset with thorns and precipices, he is: taken as a rule, in a vast majority of cases, loth to part with a blessing so great; a joy so exalted and so engrossing.—Though this species of human happiness is marked, and strongly indicative of the creative goodness of God, man's mental adaptiveness to life-enjoyment, and, hence, evidence of Divine goodness, far surpasses the bodily sources of delight and comfort. Thus thought—considered as discoursive, judgment, volition, memory, simply regarded as human faculties, are soul-prerogatives, and, as such, involve a degree of pleasure and satisfaction, unknown among inferior grades of life. Add to these grand endowments, the extraordinary gift of articulate speech, and the power of communicating our thoughts even to remote lands and ages; the implanting of the tender sentiments of love and affection, together with a high appreciative sense of the family and the social ties; the rare and important ability to adapt our conduct to the hallowed principles of ethics, sanctioned

by conscience, and verified by experience; and, above all, the propensity, universally inherent in mankind, to recognize and adore the God, whose goodness is so conspicuous: all these striking instances in point—standing out in bold relief, elicit, at once, our profoundest admiration and unbounded gratitude!

From the foregoing exhibition of the nature of the Divine justice and goodness, it appears as clearly as that two and three are five, or that a part is less than the whole, that God being—as I have proved, just and good, cannot: being God and, therefore—as the Apostle writes, without "variableness, or shadow of turning," be now just and good, and, at another time, unjust and bad: his way is straight, not crooked as man's, alas, often is!

Having found in the exemplifications adduced above, that the justice of God is of such a character that it invariably rewards the good, and punishes the wicked; or, in other words, that the innocent and the guilty are never confounded, and that the guilty alone is punished, while the innocent is unharmed: such is the plain, undoubted result of our investigation. Let us now compare these principles with a couple widely accepted dogmas in the orthodox churches—the imputation of Adam's sin, and man's punishment in an endless hell.

I have already demonstrated in several of my

Works, that—as a mere matter of history, the imputation of the sin of Adam, the hypothetical progenitor of mankind, is clearly out of the question, inasmuch as no such person has existed, or —supposing that he has existed, he cannot have been the ancestor of our race, as ages and ages before him, man existed upon the globe. Besides, considered as a question of right, the imputation of another's guilt to innocent persons, whether descendants of him or not, would be a flagrant wrong, and—though an evil being might do so diabolical a thing, a just God, who punishes only the guilty, is incapable of committing so black a crime. If, therefore, Jesus taught such a monstrous doctrine, let the proof be adduced: I have shown, on former occasions, that—sound principles of exegesis deciding, he is totally reticent on the subject!

As to the hell of orthodox import and dimensions, it is a foolish conceit as well as a falsehood of the vilest kind, and not to be entertained for a moment by any reasonable being. A father, and that father too the heavenly Father, to punish his children, whom—for wise and good purposes, he has been pleased to make peccable, or susceptible of sin, that they might be likewise susceptible of virtue, by the infliction of everlasting torment for erring, or doing amiss, in their struggle towards moral growth, and that too without the possibility of making repentance available to the alleviation

of suffering, or the rescue from vice and folly, is a doctrine fit only to be believed by lunatics, and presided over by Furies! For the honor of humanity, I insist that the name of God shall be no longer desecrated by the profession of a creed at once so silly and so monstrous, and that, henceforth, God shall be considered to be no less just than an earthly parent, who punishes his offspring to correct, not to torment; to ameliorate, not to destroy them! To lie to the detriment of man is bad, but to lie against God, and call it *divine worship*, is a feat, which had never been attempted—except perhaps in *Pandemonium*, before the introduction of orthodox creeds into the ritual of the primitive and unsullied forms of Christian worship!

Adverting now to the goodness of God, it will not be difficult to perceive that it teaches a lesson equally effective and distinct in its elucidation and repudiation of the dismal questions at issue —the imputation of sin and the infliction of hell-punishment.—The dogma of the imputation of sin, already partially had under review, and denounced on the principle of being iniquitous, and —of course, militating against the Divine justice, demands a prior notice. What then does the goodness of God teach in this regard? "That," I answer, "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" that—as we have seen, in the

brief portraiture we have given of it, it is his delight to make all his sentient creatures, especially man—the highest type of organic vitality, happy; that he is far: from the very nature of his goodness, from entailing the sins of the guilty upon the innocent, as that would be not only unjust, but cruel, and in utter violation of the evident principles of his goodness; that "*in him* we live, and move, and have our being;" and that—to crown the whole, he "commendeth his love"—his affectionate goodness, "toward us, in that—while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Adam and Eve, according to the generally accepted beliefs, sowed transgression, and—according to Scripture-teaching, as well as in spite of antagonistic human creeds, they: and they only, had to reap the evil consequences. This is justice, becoming Divinity no less than man, and it is also goodness, running parallel here with the justice of God, who has undeniably ordained only *enjoyment*—not suffering, for man, and, hence, employs chastisement only to reform, ameliorate, and conduct to ultimate happiness. I will only add, that the notions expressed in Scripture: that God deals *arbitrarily* in meting out rewards and punishments, are simply accommodations to still prevailing anthropopathic prejudices!

The views here advocated, differ materially from the orthodox creed, which teaches the singular and somewhat incredible doctrines, that

the *ancestors* of the human race, having sinned, God—who had made them susceptible of sin, was highly displeased, though he could not but have foreseen their disobedience, and—in defiance of every principle that may be supposed inherent in the Creator, he determined that the bad consequences of their guilt, should pass over to all coming generations; that, thus, the imputation of original sin, worked the damnation of the entire human race; that—to be saved from so terrible a calamity, God, many ages afterwards, sent Jesus Christ into the world, who—it seems, had no other means to effect a cure of so widely-spread and dire a disease, but his death; and that, accordingly, he died, but, lo, after all his pains and humiliations, only a small fraction of mankind are saved: one in a score, a hundred, a thousand, according to Calvinistic and other allied creeds!

If, finally, at this stage of the inquiry, we take a glimpse at the grotesque orthodox hell, the scene is appalling and calculated utterly to amaze us. Here we behold innumerable souls in torment, all crying and writhing for pain, or wailing and raving in despair, with here and there not a few pleading for mercy: God looks on, enjoying the agony, dismay, and lamentations of his poor, hapless children. Alas, he has no bowels of compassion! The fires keep on raging; the devils to laugh and mock at their deluded

dupes; and the God, whose goodness is infinite, sits by and nods approval! Oh, what astounding abuse of the goodness and long-suffering of the Almighty! What insane hallucination! What devilish tragedy devised under pretence of a saving orthodox faith! Is there no police in ostensibly Christian countries, set to watch over the interests of virtue, and the sanctity of religion, that the propagators of so atrocious a blasphemy against God, and foul insult of man, may be condignly punished for their unparalleled presumption and barefaced audacity? "For shame, drop the curtain," cries the friend of humanity and the believer in God—*the heavenly Father!*

A creed of a true faith may be now briefly formulated from a reference to the foregoing thesis: God is just and good; he never punishes the innocent for the guilty; he rewards the good to bless and excite them to virtue; and he punishes solely, and on ethic principles only, for the sake of reformation, growth in virtue, and the attainment of happiness!

CHAPTER VIII.

The Apostle St. Thomas, the Bereans, King Agrippa, and Pontius Pilate, or the Way how True Religious Conviction should be attained.

PARAGRAPH I.

The Apostle St. Thomas.

In the Gospel according to St. John, 20. 24–29, inclusively, we find a very interesting and instructive description of the conduct of the apostle St. Thomas in respect to the grounds, or sufficient evidence of faith. The first time that Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared to his disciples: the narrative states, St. Thomas was absent, and—of course, could not judge from personal inspection, whether the person, claiming to be Jesus, on that occasion, was Jesus or not, or whether—in fact, there had been any extraordinary appearance in the semblance of Jesus, at all.

When, therefore, the news of the event reached him, he peremptorily declared, as we are further informed, that he should continue to persist in his refusal to give credit to the report, unless facts, *directly* appealing to his conviction, would satisfy his judgment; for—says the scrupulous and honest searcher after truth, "Except I shall

see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

This Christian disciple—considering the age in which he lived, and the nature of his social surroundings, was certainly a very extraordinary man, being evidently a close and fearless thinker, and the only follower of Christ of any note—as far as is known, who had formed any accurate idea of our duty, nicely and conscientiously to ponder and sift the proofs which are to decide our judgment in favor of faith: he moves—as is eminently proper, deliberately and reflectingly in the important matter; he uses his God-given reason; and he is at once too God-fearing as well as too profoundly appreciative of human worth and dignity, to believe *blindly*, and thus burden his soul with the sin and shame of infidelity of duty. Hence, rather than to believe erroneous, he will not believe at all, let people say what they might, and slander him as much as their baseness and folly should dictate, his faith was a concern solely between his conscience and his God!

Jesus once more favors his disciples with his sacred presence, and this time our wary Apostle constitutes one of the novel assembly. Jesus aware—it seems, of Thomas' incredulity, bids him "reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

Thomas complies with the behest of his Lord; is satisfied; and believes! What a splendid example of rational search after truth, and striking instance of the use of *inductive evidence* in behoof of faith.

What is very remarkable in this interview between Christ and Thomas, and must here, by no means, be passed over in silence, is the pressing request of Christ that Thomas should put his Master to the test of a close ocular and tangible scrutiny, and then—sufficient evidence appearing, *believe;* not believe, no matter whether he might be convinced or not; or whether the case in question, was true or false! Do you hear this, and will you lay it to heart, ye wicked teachers of a blind faith? Ye robbers of the rights of conscience! Pause, I pray you; repent; and let your faith be *born again:* it much needs a second birth—the birth *anōthen*, that is, the birth from above; the birth, in short, that has a little reason and common sense!

PARAGRAPH II.

The Bereans.

The interesting passage of Scripture, upon which the concise argument of the present paragraph, will rest, occurs in the Acts of the Apostles, 17. 10–12. Though its contents is limited, its import is no less weighty than it is novel and commendable. A brief analysis will set it in its true light, and point out its proper bearing.

Berea—the name of a Grecian city in Macedonia, was situated on the Gulf of Thessalonica, known at present as the Gulf of Saloniki, and contained—it appears, a numerous population of Jews. Of these descendants of the "Father of the Faithful," it is said that "they were more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica." The superior nobility here referred to with implied praise of its possessors, relates—according to Clarke, the learned commentator, rather to disposition and conduct than to birth, or extraction; for says this writer, "It was a maxim among the Jews, that none was of a noble spirit, who did not employ himself in the study of the law."

These Berean Jews—thus distinguished for their excellent character, were not like their brethren in Thessalonica: an ignorant, self-conceited, persecuting set of fanatics; but, on the contrary, liberal-minded, reasonable men, ready to listen to the momentous tidings, which Paul and Silas, in the name of Christ, had come to announce to them, and fully resolved that—if after a thorough investigation and study of the subject, they should prove true, they would, without hesitation, embrace them, however antagonistic to the generally imbibed Jewish notions, they might prove to be. For these evidently better educated and more polished people were as circumspect as they were self-reliant and free from groveling prejudices, seeking only the truth in the final arrange-

ment of their religious creed. As a preliminary in this sensible scheme, they, therefore, "received the word"—the message of these Christian missionaries, "with all readiness of mind:" they deserved the epithet noble indeed!

This admirable readiness on the part of the Berean Jews to hear the Gospel, is not only proof of a praiseworthy liberality of sentiment, but it also honorably distinguished them from the generality of their bigoted and infatuated countrymen, who —having crucified the venerable Founder of Christianity, persisted in their narrow-mindedness and hatred against him, by "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the *disciples* of the Lord." But simply hearing what these men had come to declare to them, was not enough for these thoughtful and honest inquirers after truth. The doctrines which they set forth, might be true, and they might also be false! The preachers referred their hearers to the Scriptures for proof of their veracity. To the Scriptures, therefore, these sensible and judicious citizens resorted; for, says the text, they "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so;" that is—according to the commentator noticed above, "whether the promises and types corresponded with the alleged fulfillment in the person, works, and sufferings of Jesus Christ."—It is only further necessary here to add, that the *Scriptures* mentioned in this connection, mean the Old Testament: the

only written Scriptures, which then composed the Bible. These were the Scriptures, which these worthy people searched; studied; laid to heart, and the result was that "many of them believed."

As to the legitimacy of the issue at which these sensible and candid Bereans arrived in their diligent, and honest researches, or whether it was based upon correct or false principles of interpretation, I leave for others to determine. My business with them is confined to their conduct or care, in ascertaining whether the new creed, which Paul and his associate propounded to them, was true; in laying the foundation of their faith not on hearsay, but on personal investigation; conscientious conviction; and, hence, in logical inference! Hail, all hail, the noble Bereans: patterns to Christian creed-makers, in all time to come!

PARAGRAPH III.

King Agrippa.

The disquisition which will be attempted under this heading, is based upon the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, with particular reference however, to the twenty-eighth verse of the latter of those chapters.

The apostle Paul—having given violent offence to the Jews by his strenuous zeal and indefatigable exertions in the work of Christianizing man-

kind, "the high priest, and the chief of the Jews," preferred an accusation against him before Festus, the governor of Judæa. But when "the accusers stood up"—in presence of the august tribunal, they brought no such accusations as the governor had been led to expect, but—on the contrary, "had"—as he says, "certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive," &c.

While these religious squabbles and antitheses of belief took place between the advocates of the Gospel and the Levitical ritual, King Agrippa paid his excellency, the governor, a visit, and the polite Roman—to flatter his royal guest, had the accused brought before him, that—having been examined by him, he might have "somewhat to write;" "for said he," "it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him."

A more particular though brief notice of King Agrippa, is necessary here, to set the further details of the subject under discussion, in their proper light and true significance.—King Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa, a descendant of Herod the Great, and was, therefore, of *Idumean* lineage; but though alien in blood, he was Jewish in religion, "the Idumeans having been conquered and converted to Judaism by John

Hyrcanus 130 B.C."*—At the time of which this article treats, Agrippa was ruler over the provinces Gaulonites, Trachonites, Batanea, Pancas, Abilene, &c., and, besides, could boast that he enjoyed in a marked degree, the smiles of the imperial court.

Such, in a few words, was the distinguished person, before whom, the Apostle argued his cause both at considerable length, and with apparently great animation and emphasis. It is the substance only, however, of this notable defence, which will here be laid before the reader, from which he may judge of its cogency, or discover the causes of its result.

The Apostle begins his defence by stating, that he thought himself happy to know that his majesty "was expert in all the customs and questions among the Jews," implying hence that he might safely rely upon an equitable decision of his case. He then mentions that he had been formerly a strictly orthodox Jew, and inferior to none of his nation in his profound devotion to the Jewish faith; that he had even carried his fidelity to the old creed so far as—at last, to become a cruel and relentless persecutor of the Christian sect; that, finally, on a journey to Damascus, he saw the Lord in a resplendent vision; was sharply rebuked by him for his ill-treatment

* Chambers's Encyclopædia.

of his inoffensive followers; and that—in conclusion, he was formally installed in the office of "a minister and a witness," in behoof of the demands and interests of Christianity. Thus clothed with the authority of an apostle and minister of Christ, he did all in his power to disseminate the principles of the Gospel, demonstrating that the *Messianic* prophecies were all fulfilled in Christ, and that the Jews ought, therefore, to acknowledge and honor him as their Lord and Savior. They, on the other hand, peremptorily denied the truth and relevancy of his argument; fiercely denounced him as an impostor and an infidel; and the former persecutor was now in his turn persecuted. Of course, he persisted in asserting his innocence and the justice of his cause, declaring, "I am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers."

Having thus set the case in question, in its true light, before his royal auditor, he boldly asks him, "Believest thou the prophets? and confidently adds: I know that thou believest." Then the king—we are told, said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"!

In this well-arranged and carefully digested speech, the apostle does not reason, but simply narrates; he, therefore, passes over all the formulas of logic, usually employed in maintaining a proposition, and tacitly demands that every-

thing which he has said or affirmed, should be implicitly taken for granted. And yet—strange as it may seem, the king is "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Persuasion is ordinarily founded on reasoning: on inference, based on premises, which have axiomatic evidence; yet—in the absence of all this dialectic method of making out a *vera causa*, or true case, Paul—though simply appealing to historic data, comes very near to carry conviction to the royal breast. Was the king, perhaps, credulous? No; for, though "almost persuaded," he was not quite persuaded: he virtually asked for proof, or a more forcible argument! and would not yield assent till it should have been given. Hence—as far as is known, he never: for want of satisfactory evidence, it is to be presumed, became a proselyte to the new faith. It is in view of this cautious, scrutinizing trait in the character of this man that he justly endears himself to the honest, sober seeker after truth, who will not stir in predicating a faith, till he has good grounds for doing so. Like St. Thomas, this distinguished ruler preferred obstinately to persist in unbelief, rather than—in his judgment, which might indeed be erroneous, to yield to seeming, or caprice, and call it faith, or honesty of the religious sentiment. King Agrippa, then, affords another bright example of a man, who wisely and dutifully builds his religious convictions upon a solid foundation,

and who will, consequently, be blessed of God, as every honest man, "the noblest work of God," ever will be!

PARAGRAPH IV.

Pontius Pilate.

The thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth verses of the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel, according to John, furnish the subject, and indicate the task, to which the present paragraph is devoted. In the first of these verses—standing out in bold relief, and challenging a concise scrutiny, Jesus is represented as saying, that he was born, and came into the world, that he "should bear witness unto the truth." Pontius Pilate—at the time governor of Judæa, before whose dread tribunal, Jesus had been arraigned, struck at this extraordinary announcement, immediately asked him, "What is truth?" The venerable personage—thus interrogated, contrary to what, it seems, might reasonably have been expected, made no reply, and the governor had to go away unsatisfied. What a pity that such should have been the case! What a detriment—I venture to add, to the world!

The truth, here alluded to, was decidedly of a religious nature; concerning the deeply-rooted religious sentiment of mankind; and included, in its practical import, the postulating of the religious creed and cultus, or the observance of

Divine worship in its widest and most exhaustive sense. If Jesus had left an authentic statement on record of what he deemed truth, in religion, and—of course, sound and genuine in devotion, how exceedingly glad and thankful all friends of truth generally, and of religious truths in particular, would have been, and how very different, I have no doubt, would be the belief as well as the spiritual state of the Christian Church, from what, alas, it now is! How strange too it is, that Jesus—having been especially charged: on his own showing, with the exalted mission "to bear witness unto the truth," should forbear to make use of his sacred prerogative, or—in other words, to comply with a duty which he recognized as pre-eminently and solely confided to him, and plainly tell the distinguished functionary, who—I take it for granted, made the present inquiry in good faith: not playfully or in mockery, as some think. Why should not an educated and intelligent heathen be truth-seeking as well as any other person of a reflecting habit? This omission—to respond to the interrogation, "What is truth," is utterly inexplicable, and must be for ever deplored as the grand, unsolved *desideratum!*

Truth—according to Webster, is "conformity to fact or reality; exact accordance with that which is, or has been, or shall be," &c. This definition embraces geometry, or the science of

magnitude, which is susceptible of exact demonstration, and which may be, therefore, weighed and measured, or numerically expressed. With this species of truth, Jesus had no immediate concern; for it did not fall directly within the sphere of his mission. Moral and spiritual truth alone, I conceive, claimed his attention, and satisfy our need. This truth too admits of proof or demonstration, and often as *certain* as a mathematical truth, only not so *exact.*

Christians—being required to "worship in spirit and in truth;" that is—waiving the Hebrew idiom, conveyed in this phrase, *in a true spirit,* should use their utmost endeavor to be sure that the result of their religious investigations, is based on tenable, practical principles, and that, accordingly, it "conforms to fact or reality;" or accords with the nature of things, as they are pointed out to us in the works and ways of the Creator. Hence experience; observation; evidence; instinct—including the affections and antipathies of the soul; the mode of ratiocination, common among mankind; the hopes and aspirations, more or less, animating every breast, &c., are to be accounted so many sources of reference; so many indices, pointing out and verifying the method after which a true, God-approved, and saving religion, should be elaborated and perpetuated!

Pontius Pilate—though a heathen: the hack-

neyed synonym among some people, who happen to be superlatively wise in their own conceit, of all that is low and vile, and stupid, among men, took some interest in truth—a thing not largely participated in by the majority of Christians, and, hence, he asked Jesus to explain it, having been encouraged to do so, no doubt, because the former had positively declared that—as has been already intimated, he had particularly and exclusively come upon the earth; that is, assumed the office of a Divinely appointed teacher and guide of mankind, or—in other words, "to bear witness to the truth." I will only add, that—though our inquiry after truth may not be always successful, or answered affirmatively, it is far better to seek after this bright and lovely jewel: more precious than gold, ay, more to be desired than even life itself, and to be disappointed in the search, than criminally to neglect or despise it. Ay, what is truth? Let the solution of this transcendent problem, be the constant, holiest effort of my life!

CHAPTER IX.

The Innocence of Little Children.

THE following are the salient Scripture-texts, which constitute the basis of the present argument: Matthew, 18. 1–4; 19. 13–15; Mark, 10. 13–16; and Luke, 18. 15–17. The contents, of which they are composed, are naturally divisible into two parts; the one appertaining to the children, the other to the adults of which they treat: parties, between whom is a striking contrast, both in a psychical and moral point of view, and who, consequently, give occasion for the inculcation of important truths.

The reputation of Jesus—at this time, as a famous rabbi, and eminent reformer, must have been extensive, and have excited a good deal of attention, whence the inference was naturally arrived at, that—as he seemed to be an extraordinary person, he must be endowed with an extraordinary measure of grace. Who, then, was better suited to impart blessings than he? They, therefore, no doubt, not only believed in him themselves, and expected to be blessed through his agency, but—actuated by a spirit of consist-

ency, brought their children to him, that they also: as well as themselves, might be blessed. They were not disappointed; for—according to Mark, he did "bless them," and thus graciously complied with their ardent wishes, expressed in Matthew, by the phrase "that he would put his hands on them and pray," and in Luke, by the naive prayer, "that he would touch them."

The disciples—it may be presumed, thinking that the demands of the kingdom of heaven were of too grave and urgent a character unnecessarily to allow meddling with affairs which might be, with greater propriety, confined to the nursery, objected to so unwarrantable an interruption of their Master in his arduous work, and, accordingly, resisted the attempt. Noticing their conduct, Jesus at once interposed, saying: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Such is a brief version of the interesting and pathetic scene, as it is described by Mark and Luke; with which Matthew substantially agrees, while his manner of stating it, varies a trifle from that of his evangelical compeers.

What first solicits our attention here, is that the children, brought to Jesus, are so greatly extolled by him for the innocence; the goodness; in short, the moral excellence of their nature. They are unhesitatingly represented by the Savior as the emphatically normal types of human fit-

ness for the kingdom of heaven. Such, in fact, we are led to infer, was their adaptedness for citizenship in that spiritual commonwealth, that the august founder of it, found nothing in their spiritual condition that needed to be changed, to enable them to enjoy its blessings, and to be for ever happy in it. He does not lament that he cannot do them all the good he would like to do them, because they are so corrupt on account of Adam's sin, or debased by inherited moral impurity. Nor does he say that they must be first purged from this dire and deadly stain, by the rite of baptism, and be thus *born again*, before he could do anything for their happiness, or bless them! No, he finds them already pure, and tacitly declares that all they need is Gospel-tuition, to entitle them to a full participation of Gospel-blessings, for which he unreservedly declares them to be pre-eminently qualified, as has been stated above.*

The Jews—as is well known, observed the rite of circumcision, and laid most stress upon its importance as a Levitical, or ritualistic practice, but it was primarily, no doubt, simply a *sanitary* institution, suggested by a torrid climate, or, per-

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* How different from this Gospel-teaching is, for example, that of the Augsburg Confession, which treating of baptism, says: "It ought also to be administered to children, who are *thereby* dedicated to God, and *received into his favor!*"

haps, by a structural abnormity. One thing, at least, is undeniable, that the Old Testament view of human nature, or theory of anthropology, knows absolutely nothing of original sin, imputed to the human race! The Jewish children were, therefore, considered clean from their birth; clean without dipping, or sprinkling, or any other mode of soul-purification. A case, recorded in the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, will further illustrate as well as justify the position here laid down: David, the celebrated king of the Jews, lost a child, that claimed for his mother the famous Bathsheba—once the wife of a brave but ill-fated soldier in the royal army. The father—as we read, was inconsolable while the child was sick, and gave vent to his intense grief by "fasting and weeping;" for, said the stricken parent, when he was interrogated about the diversity of his conduct during the sickness, and after the death of the child, I thought, "Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me"!

Here we do not find the least hint or reference to an unfitness of the dead child for happiness in a future state: no thought—at least not expressed, of Adam's sin, or of soul-corruption in consequence of it. The bereaved father—as a last

hope, and a final triumph over all his sufferings, cherishes the comfortable and indomitable assurance: "I shall go to him"! Would the king have sought consolation in going to his child, if he had believed that it was in a bad place, which would have been the case, according to received orthodox notions, if it had died, being vitiated by hereditary sin, and departed hence without redemption? No! The "chosen people" knew nothing—at least the Old Testament knows nothing, of the monstrous dogma of the imputation of sin. What right, then, have *Christians* to foist this false and ridiculous tenet upon the Church of Christ, and by systematic misrepresentations of facts, pervert and corrupt and stultify the souls of unsophisticated believers?*

The innocence and moral purity of little children—also called *young* children in the text, appears further from the circumstance, that they are emphatically held up to the disciples of Christ, as typical of sound Christian principles, and who

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* The custom of orthodox commentators, to point to the fifth verse of the fifty-first Psalm, as a proof-text for the verification of the fiction, called the imputation or inheritance of original sin, is too absurd any longer to gain credence except among fanatics and the mentally imbecile. All that the writer of that lyric teaches in the passage referred to, is, that man is sinful, and, of course, inherits this attribute as a part of his nature, not as a visitation due to another's guilt: it is but a necessary concomitant of free-agency!

deserve, therefore, to be carefully imitated, especially in the incipient stages of the Christian life. Accordingly we read: "Except ye be converted"—*straphete:* changed in mind, according to Parkhurst, "and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," addressing himself to some of his aspiring disciples, who—it seems, thought more of self-aggrandizement in following Christ, than of living uprightly and making themselves useful to their fellow-beings: they were proud, selfish; they must become humble, docile, unselfish and unworldly, if they would be genuine believers. In short, they must put themselves into the self-denying attitude of confiding, tractable, and obedient *pupils.* "As a little child," they must "receive the kingdom of God," if they would have any share or fellowship in it! Thus we see, that little children are demonstrably unsullied by extraneous or vicarious guilt, and bear to-day—as did the first *man*, in the morning of creation, the *image* of God, and the *seal* of Divinity in their souls!

The inquiry now naturally presents itself, why do *Christians* still consider little children—in the face of the foregoing salient facts, polluted by Adam's sin, and believe that if they are not baptized they are not in favor with God, or are lost? Is it possible that people—pretending to soundness of faith, and to be especially worthy of the

Christian name, can be still so blind; so little read in the Scriptures, as to believe in the damnation of unbaptized children! Such lamentable incongruity of views with facts, could not take place if—as the Apostle enjoins, Christians would "prove all things:" appertaining to their creed, and hold fast only "that which is good;" that is, reasonable, true, and conformable with common sense!

The dogma that "in Adam's fall, we sinned all," and based among other texts, upon an erroneous exegesis of Titus, 3. 5, is further proved to be inadmissible, because soul-corruption cannot have taken place by the imputation of Adam's, as no such person—as is clear to every intelligent mind, has ever existed, or at least not as the progenitor of mankind. By the phrase "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," in that passage, reference is simply made to the Jewish custom of baptizing heathen proselytes after they had embraced their faith, and, of course, renounced their former religious connections: this change of sentiment, and symbol of purity of purpose, they called the *new-birth*, or *renewing of the Holy Ghost!*

A similar new-birth, or change of religious opinion, as a preliminary formula in Christian conversion, Christ requires of his followers, as may be seen in the Gospel according to John, 3. 3, 5. In neither case, however, was corruption,

in consequence of imputed sin, premised: the idea was foreign to Jewish belief, which is plainly and emphatically expressed by the prophet Ezekiel, when he peremptorily asserts that "the *soul* that sinneth, *it* shall die"!

CHAPTER X.

Religion—a Constituent, or Element of the Human Constitution.

The exalted religious sentiment is inherent in human nature, and cannot, therefore, be ignored. Nor can it be neglected or treated lightly, without serious and lasting detriment to the health and peace of mind. This inference is self-evident and should command our serious attention; for—if the religious sentiment is an original endowment, derived directly from the Creator, it must be the will of the Creator that it should be carefully cultivated and made a chief power in practical life, otherwise: it is evident, the important gift would be useless, and its bestowal in vain.

Being thus a primordial element in the human constitution, religion is as old as man himself, and there has, accordingly, never existed a people: or even individual of sound mind, that has not had some belief, or that did not observe some kind of religious worship. Hence fetichism, polytheism, theism, have successively marked the religious history, and illustrated the tendency and

progress of the religious development of mankind. As may readily be supposed, this grand attribute of the soul did not always take an upward direction, nor had it always an entirely reasonable inception, however well-meant might be its design; for, like man himself, it has its infancy and its pupilage, and needs—as its manifestations in different ages as well as among all nations of the world, amply testify, frequent revision and often extensive reforms, to adapt it to the demands of advanced intelligence, and the reasonable insinuations of an increasingly-awaking and more accurately appreciative conscience. In short, the religious sentiment—though God-given, is: properly speaking, only a constitutional *susceptibility* of the human race. It has *latent* capacities, but to make them available in the soul's highest interests, they must be diligently developed; be educated; be perfected; just like the rest of the human faculties: more fitly—I conceive, denominated *soul-capabilities.*

Religion—as we have seen, being thus natural to every person, is, therefore, *necessary* to every person. And while it continues to be the common birthright of all men, recognizing in each individual the inalienable right of a free expression of itself, and is, consequently, at once tolerant and pacific as well as a blessing and an honor to its possessors, *theology* is notoriously apt to be encroaching, dictating, and even persecuting,

claiming—contrary to an innate diversity of the human mind, conformity of all men to a common creed, and hurling anathemas against all dissenters and independent thinkers. Religion is essential to man's integrity, and always—while it holds to the enjoyment of equal rights, a blessing. On the contrary, theology is not necessary to human welfare; is often, as we have seen, mischievous and overbearing in its tendency; and can well, therefore, be dispensed with.

In his "History of Civilization in England," Buckle thus lucidly as well as concisely, describes the difference between religion and theology: "Religion," he writes, "is to each individual according to the inward light with which he is endowed. In different characters, therefore, it assumes different forms, and can never be reduced to one common and arbitrary rule. Theology, on the other hand, claiming authority over all minds, and refusing to recognize their essential divergence, seeks to compel them to a single creed, and sets up one standard of absolute truth, by which it tests every one's opinions; presumptuously condemning those who disagree with that standard," &c.

The religious element in the human constitution, being—as I have shown, a gift of the Creator, it cannot ordinarily be difficult for man to detect undoubted traces of the existence and character of him, who has already thus im-

pressed the clear insignia of his being and will upon our souls. How delighted and thankful man should be, to be thus able to know and to worship a Supreme Being; a being that tenderly cares for him, and who—having endowed him with this transcendent faculty, tacitly bids him to live conformably to it, and to be happy. On the contrary, how dreary and dismal must be the life of the unfortunate person, who denies that there is a God, and, hence, lives in the world without the sweet solace of having a heavenly Father to go to, to love, to adore! Oh, the atheist must be wretched indeed, and I cannot, therefore, think that any person can be atheistic from choice, or as the result of a healthy ratiocination. No. It cannot—in such case, depend simply on man's will, whether he will recognize a God or not, but must be owing to some mental abnormity. Let us, therefore, not insolently judge, or rudely condemn him: he is eminently an object of pity, forbearance, and the largest charity. He cannot help that he is orphaned from God. It is a sad *idiosyncrasy* of the soul, and God alone can explain it, as he alone has the right to deal with it!

As religion and faith are often confounded, an attempt at discrimination between them, may not be inappropriate here. Religion I, therefore, remark, is solely based upon personal conviction, founded upon reasons, deemed sufficiently satis-

factory, to warrant assent: it is the result entirely of personal spontaneity and research. Faith, on the other hand, is referred to the testimony of a witness. If such testimony is considered sufficiently convincing, it is approved and accepted, whether it relates to a more or less ample religious creed, or even only to a single dogma of faith. This definition of faith and religion is, I think, plainly enough laid down to enable any one readily to distinguish between them, but it is not to be inferred from it, that religion rests always upon irrefragable truth, nor that faith is not, in many instances, I am sorry to say it, a mere credulity, and, therefore, received on bare credit, hearsay, or authority! Such faith cannot escape the condemnation of an insulted God!

Divine worship: in other words, the worship of deity, or what was supposed to be such, is as old as the first outward expression of the "organ of veneration," or the religious principle inherent in the human race. For man—sensible of his impotence and comparative helplessness, and finding little aid or redress among his kind, is only too glad in his many necessities not to lean upon a power greater than himself; that—at length, during the more advanced stages of the religious sentiment, he recognizes as *God*—in an exalted sense of the term, at once acknowledging and adoring him as the omnipotent creator and preserver of all things. His worship is

at first sensuous and groveling, but as it advances in its growth, it gradually attains to spirituality. Formerly, it needed, or, at least, sanctioned the priestly office and intercessors, but in process of time, every worshiper learned to address himself personally or directly to the hallowed object of his devotion. Sacrifices of beasts ceased, and man gave his *heart* to God; the altar-flame now no longer wafts "a sweet savor" toward heaven, and, in place of it, man—in the pleasing exercise of the sublime duties of piety and godliness, presents his body and soul a living and more excellent waive-offering to the God, who has made him!

False notions of Divine worship are still extensively prevalent among worshipers, even orthodox Christians not excepted, and need a concise notice in this place, that they may be not only laid bare, but appropriate suggestions made for their correction. Many people seem to think that God could hardly get along in a comfortable way without their *Divine* service; that they do him a special favor by regularly going to church, singing hymns, reciting the *creed*, and invoking his name. Poor, deluded souls! what precious thing have you that you could give or offer to God, that he has not much better and more amply already? Learn, then, fellow-Christians, that in worshiping God, you do yourselves the greatest service; that what you call Divine ser-

vice, is really the worshipers' service; a service to benefit and ennoble man; to make him wiser, better, more useful, and—of course, more self-respected as well as more happy. God: it is clear, does not need man's gifts; for if they are good, it is he that has bestowed them, and if they are evil, he, who is infinite goodness, could not accept them!

From the view that has been here taken of the subject, it is, by no means, to be inferred that God is indifferent to Divine worship, or leaves it optional with us to worship him or not. O, no! For, having imbued man with the inestimable religious principle, he wants him diligently, nay, devoutly to heed it, and hence, of course, carefully to develop it; which it is impossible to do without manifesting itself in the observance of Divine worship and the devout aspirations of the soul. Nay, he is just as much under obligation to worship his Maker, as he is to do justly and to walk humbly in his sight; but it is for his own benefit, his own honor, his own welfare, that he is to worship God: he goes to him poor, and he leaves him rich!

Moreover, to worship God in concert, public worship or ritualism, is to be resorted to only as a means, not as an end, as has been already intimated, and, therefore, it should be eminently reasonable; based on true principles of the soul's needs; and only employed to prepare the wor-

shiper for an improved life in God, or the practice of virtue in its important bearing upon the various ardent duties and complex relations of our present existence. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that ceremonial worship is useful only in furthering the end of the precious and universally obligatory religious sentiment, and in thus educating man—more and more, in conformity to the Divine will, and the inevitable conditions of his destiny. In short, more the child of God, and his life the reflection of the Divinity upon earth! Do we worship for such an end, when we go to the *house of God?* Let us not trifle, I beseech you, either with God or with ourselves: if our worship is a delusion, all our religious pretensions are false, and can end only in shame and ruined souls! Ay, reader, "Virtue only makes our bliss below"!—POPE.

CHAPTER XI.

True Faith in its Widest Practical Significance.

ORTHODOX theology teaches that man—being radically corrupt in consequence of Adam's sin, is neither good himself, nor able of his own endeavor, to do what is good, and that hence, whatever good he possesses, is a gift of God, supernaturally conferred upon him. Faith is one of these extraordinary graces, or super-human provisions, intended by God to insure our salvation! This doctrine—thus set forth, is totally incredible and false.—First, it is totally incredible in its relation to God. For man: being thus exclusively dependent upon God for the supernatural gift of faith, can be saved only in case it pleases his Maker to bestow it upon him. Whence it incontrovertibly follows, that all that are lost—according to the orthodox creeds, are lost for want of the timely bestowal of this blessing: the *sīne quā non* of salvation, and that the blame must, consequently, be charged to the neglect, the oversight, or the arbitrary decision of God! Can a doctrine that involves so blasphemous an alternative, presume upon further

credence among mankind? I hope to God, that this stupendous and infamous falsehood, will soon, very soon, pass into oblivion's profoundest abyss!

The doctrine that the acquisition of faith, is not in the power of man—corrupted by alien or imputed sin, but is conferred as a gratuity or favor, by God, is totally false, second, in its relation to man.—Man is not corrupt, and, therefore, not powerless in the attainment of faith; for the Adam of orthodox significance, either never existed—as I have proved in several of my former Publications as well as in a previous chapter of the present Essay, or if he did, he cannot have been the progenitor of mankind, as millennial ages prior to his assumed era, man flourished upon the globe. Not existing at all, he can of course, have corrupted or spiritually undone, no one, or existing, yet not existing as the putative father of the human race, this race cannot stand in a filial or blood-relation to him, and is, therefore, without Adamic taint, or in a state which is the reverse of the original sin-creed, and, consequently, competent to help himself in all reasonable requirements. For—as Cicero writes: "Nihilum ex nihilo oriatur." Hence, the conclusion is unavoidable, that the dogma, that man cannot believe and be saved without supernatural aid or Divine interposition, is at once baseless and utterly false!

The new-birth—as it is technically called, is

prominently taught in all the *orthodox* branches of the Christian Church, as no less vital to Christianity than faith itself, and equally the product of supernatural grace. In what ordinal relation —in respect to time, these miraculously imparted components of the orthodox Christian-life, stand to each other, it is not clearly taught, or well understood. For, if man is so corrupt by inheritance, that he cannot—of his own will and striving, believe, he must be spiritually sound or whole as soon as God has: in a miraculous manner, made him a believer. What need, then, is there of a new-birth, in a case already provided for? Or, suppose the new-birth to precede the bestowal of faith, then the latter need not be a supernatural gift, or an extra-human grace; for man, being now spiritually made whole again, and the Adamic pollution having been thus effectually wiped out, he can sufficiently help himself by the use of the *natural grace*, which God has so amply and so kindly placed at his discretion.

I have already demonstrated on more than one occasion, and in clear, unmistakable language, that the New Testament does not—at least not through means of its august founder, teach a new-birth in any sense implying the notion of the orthodox dogma of that phrase. It does not predicate an Adamic corruption, involving the damnation of the human race. Why then should such an absurd and mischievous belief be any

longer allowed to debase and stultify the venerable Christian sentiment? Suppose however that such an anthropological heterodoxy should be proclaimed in the pages of the Gospel, which —for the honor of Christ, I am unwilling to concede, it is now a settled question among intelligent men, impartially seeking truth, and—when they have found it, honestly and fearlessly avowing it, that the theory of imputation of *original-sin*, is false and, therefore, untenable; and that it can be, henceforth, interesting only as *a relic* of a dark and superstitious age!

The doctrine of the new-birth, is taught more or less distinctly, in all the creeds of orthodox Christian denominations, but it does not stand out with equal prominence among all of them. *Revivalism*, resorted to occasionally or periodically, is considered by many worthy believers, as essential to the acquisition of the new-birth. Among the advocates of the doctrine of revivalism: purporting a joint-effort in the use of certain *regenerative* measures for the conversion of sinners, the phrase "to be born again," is common, and—in fact, denominationally distinctive. On the other hand, there are large branches of the Christian Church, that are seldom heard to say anything about the new-birth, or to be born again; evidently implying a flat contradiction between life and theory, deed and conviction!— These Christians hold that the Christian prin-

ciples which animate and bless parents descend upon their children, and imbue them with such a measure of the Christian spirit, that it—together with the subsequent additional graces or Divine influences, vouchsafed to them in the teaching of the Word of God, and the pious use of the sacraments, they will be able to "make their calling and election sure." Christians of this class, are evidently largely *synergistic*, and do not practically believe much in either a supernaturally inaugurated, or in a subsequently sustained and consummated miraculous Christianity. They thus decidedly lean toward a common-sense view of the matter, which fact may be regarded and welcomed as the saving-clause of their creed!

It is evident, then, that reason—in its proper spontaneity, and logical method, is competent to build up a true and saving faith. And why, I pray, should it not be thus competent? I have shown—beyond a doubt, that it is still of perfectly normal integrity, and can—in spite of all orthodox gainsay, or imperious pretension, decide on the cogency of the evidence: not hearsay or a mere *ip'se dix'it*, which must finally determine the question of *faith* or *no faith!* Yes—I repeat the query, why should reason, being sound, and capable of weighing the nature and claims of evidence, which may be adduced in behoof of it, not be also qualified to know what is true or false in the making up of a genuine, God-approving

faith? For there is—unquestionably, grace, ay, a heavenly and saving grace, in reason honestly and wisely used! Has God not given us our reason? Can he give us a bad gift? "But the gift," cries the conceited, false teacher, "has been vitiated." I deny the allegation, and challenge the proof! I will only add here, that if any one should be in doubt whether his faith is sound or true, let him look to its effects, or the net sum of its working, and if it is fruitful in *good works*, it will do!

A little more light upon the subject of grace—as a gift of God, may not be deemed irrelevant here.—Grace, as a gift of the Creator, is absolutely all in all to us; for all that we are or have is, without exception, a gift, a grace of God. It is, therefore, emphatically and strictly literally true, that "in him, we live and move and have our being;" that we are thus the living monuments of his untiring and exuberant grace; of his *Divine* grace; of his saving grace: accepting the term in its widest and most exhaustive application, or as embracing and directing our whole being; our whole needs; our whole eventful and exalted destiny! Yes, reader—in the language of St. Peter, "I rejoice with joy unspeakable," to be able to say that all that is, both great and small; from the vast world-orbs to the tiny atom; from the seraph to the animalcule, is a free-will gift or work of God, and—as far as it concerns man

and other superior intelligences, a *grace;* and that no truth is better established in natural philosophy, than that it is by this Divine grace, this grace of God, that—as St. Paul, in substance, says: "We are what we are." With appropriate emphasis, therefore, sings the sacred bard in the following pertinent strains:

"Creation, vast as it may be,
Is subject to thy will.
There's not a place, where we can flee,
But God is with us still.
On him each moment we depend;
If he withdraw, we die.
Oh, may we ne'er that God offend,
Who is for ever nigh!"

CHAPTER XII.

God's character vindicated against Inconsistency, and a False Faith set right.

If all mankind have really sinned in Adam—the hypothetical progenitor of the human race, then: according to the generally accepted creed, all mankind—unless they are supernaturally saved, must perish eternally; for God, we are told, saves only that part of the human family that stands upon Bible-ground, by interposing miraculously in their behoof, while, on the other hand, that all other peoples, constituting the far greater division of mankind, are not thus *soterially* cared for, and must, therefore, die in their sins, in consequence of the inherited Adamic pollution. This, in substance, is the teaching of all orthodox Churches on this very important subject.

Now all teaching, whether sacred or profane, claiming to be true, and involving the benevolence of God, must have scrupulous regard to the Divine character; for if consistency in the life of man, is a *jewel*, God—the all-wise as well as just and good, cannot lack it, unless we predicate a Supreme Being that is inferior in moral

excellence to man: a creator more faulty than the creature. It is a very grave mistake, and no less than a grievous wrong done to God, which they commit, who affirm that the Almighty bestows faith and a new-birth supernaturally on a part of mankind, and thus puts them in the way of salvation, while he lets the great majority shift for themselves the best they can, and then, finally, damns them for not having been miraculously born again!

This doctrine, then, of a *partial* providence of God: benefiting a part and neglecting the rest of his children; helping the former to everlasting happiness, and letting sin take its course unhindered, and, therefore, ending in endless misery, among the latter, is—to say the least, an atrocious slander against God, and totally devoid of truth: explicable only, either on the supposition of a most extraordinary hallucination, positively maniacal in its character; or on the less defensible alternative, that it owes its existence to willful and deliberate perversion, and, hence, a *pious* falsification of the truth!

The real fact in the case is, that—as I have already more than once demonstrated, there is no Adamic corruption at all, and, hence, the predication of the need of a new-birth, or *re-creation* of human nature, and an extra-human origination of faith, is simply and radically a myth, and God, accordingly stands justified in his ways toward

all men: treating them all as his children, and making no distinction among any of them in the dispensations of his blessings. The injustice and absurdity of ascribing such monstrous inconsistency to God in his dealings with his children: assuming the functions of a savior here, and coolly and unfeelingly looking on a ruined world there, will now be illustrated more in detail, and their extreme improbability pointed out. To the law, then, and to the testimony!

The very circumstance that God—according to orthodox teaching, suffered mankind during myriad ages, to live at their discretion, without the least interference—on his part, in behalf of their salvation, is irrefragable proof that they were competent to take care of themselves, in a manner compatible with the Divine will, and their true interests: thus completely nullifying the dogma of a supernatural remedial spiritual training of the Jew and the Christian, in order to *save* them.* What, to see innumerable multitudes of human beings, all his children, perish around him during a long course of ages, and yet do nothing for them till in comparatively recent times, and then—for the first time, begin to

* Only a minimum even of these—according to Calvinism, will be saved! There is, it seems to me, positively no use of laying stress upon an ostensibly Divine ordination, that works within such narrow limits. The theory is evidently on the *close-communion* principle, and smacks after bigotry!

speak of an imputed and damning sin, to a few households only of his children; together with a thence accruing necessity to be miraculously born again, or be *made*—by direct Divine influences, to believe, and, meanwhile, never inform the hosts of his other children of their great and imminent danger, nor hasten to their rescue by the mission of a Moses, a Christ, a Peter, or a Paul, is so incredible; so irreconcilable with our ideas of a good, a just, a holy God, that it is utterly impossible to be any longer entertained with any degree of patience and forbearance among intelligent people, whose moral principles have not been vitiated by a perverse religious training, totally adverse to a healthy and efficient exercise of the rational faculties.

The orthodox doctrine, teaching a *supernatural* birth and faith as necessary to salvation, is clearly a mere arbitrary assumption of silly creed-makers, imposed on believers, in the face of the plain, positive counter-teaching of the Gospel, as any one may readily convince himself, by impartially consulting that sacred authority; for he will soon find that the change from a state of sin to that of grace, is described there as entirely the spontaneous act of man, as the following texts, introduced in this place as fair representative exponents, or specimen-samples of the theory here laid down upon this weighty subject: Matthew, 3. 2; 18. 3; Luke, 15. 7, 10, 11–24; Acts, 17. 30, &c. Faith,

on the other hand, is likewise declared to be solely man's work, or the result simply of our free-agency, as may also be easily seen by a reference to the passages in the Gospel—nay, the Bible generally, which treat on this interesting question. As verifications of the proposition, that faith is exclusively a human production, and, therefore, rests on evidence, not on miracles, the following few notices, among a multitude of proofs, are adduced: Mark, 16. 16; John, 6. 47; 11. 25–27; Romans, 10. 4, 9; Galatians, 3. 22, 26; 1 Peter, 2. 6, 7, &c. Hence it is evident that conversion or the new-birth, and an evangelical or saving faith, are intrinsically and peculiarly pertaining to human agency, and, being thus put in the power of man, or intrusted to his independent personal efforts, he is—through his own unaided ability, sufficient to believe and alter his conduct, in conformity with New-Testament principles, or, in other words, to pass from sin to godliness, and from no-creed, to a saving faith. Such is biblical teaching generally, and evangelical teaching especially. Consequently the dogma of a miraculous salvation, is antibiblical as well as in complete disaccord with plain common sense, and must, therefore, be discarded as at once false and most decidedly pernicious to human progress!

Whatever, therefore, may appear in Scripture *seemingly* contrary to the positions here laid down,

is to be interpreted in accordance with the foregoing arguments, and set down as simply denoting a merely ameliorative moral change in man's conduct, achievable by his own native, or unaided exertions, and implying only a vulgar accommodation to a belief, current in the ages, during which the revelation of the Bible was ostensibly made to a part of mankind, and which habitually believed and expected miraculous interpositions of the Deity, in the government of human affairs, especially—according to New-Testament views, in relation to *salvation.*

Even now—in the opinion of many people: *Christian* people too, God continually interferes with man's free-agency; suspends the laws of nature; adapts his conduct to the change of circumstances; can be offended; propitiated; flattered; bribed, in fact! But who—that has the least intelligence, believes that there is any truth in these puerile anthropomorphic notions? Philosophy and common sense emphatically say: No body!—God governs by laws: is, in truth himself governed by laws, which are unalterably—because wisely, *fixed*, as physical science, the experience of ages, and long, as well as careful, observation, have unquestionably determined, and, hence, whatever seems to vary from them, is not reality but only appearance. Man too—it behooves to bear in mind, is under the dominion of law, and modern psychology knows nothing

of a miraculous or supernatural method of salvation: there is no need for it, being foreign to man's nature and true interest! Man—I am happy to announce to the reader, is fully adequate by the appropriate use of his own innate powers —as I have, in effect, stated above, to meet the unmistakable conditions of his exalted destiny; yet is he thus adapted and able to do thus, only through the means, both abundant and efficient, which the Creator has kindly, nay, lovingly, put at his disposal. For God really governs all things, though his government is administered indirectly or through the operation of laws: the interpreters of his will, and the dispensers of his blessings!

"But," rejoin the opponents of these views—so adverse to the *presumed* orthodox creed, "the Bible, clearly teaching Divine interposition in the laws of nature and the course of human events, its lessons must be received without gainsay or qualification." I beg to differ from this *dictum*, and to remark that what men have promulgated from time to time, as the word of God, must rest upon its own merits, and—as such, is not, in any way, to be interpreted as the result of Divine inspiration, or the supernatural influence of the *Spirit* of God, for all pretensions to supernatural communication of any truth, or system of truths, is now generally and justly classed by those, who are best able to pass an opinion on

the subject, among the credulous and superstitious beliefs of a benighted and priest-ridden age.

Do I, then, evil or wrong, in pointing out the errors and fallacies, which have so long and so grievously marred and damaged the faith and hopes, the honest self-reliance and unrestrained spontaneous energy of the soul? No one—it is certain, can sustain loss in learning the truth, or giving it room among the hallowed principles which should govern our lives; for—as says the adage, "Truth is mighty and must prevail." Error and sham must expect, sooner or later, to be exposed, and then speedily to come to an end: God wills it thus! And though it is only in a secondary or indirect way that we are the—often unworthy, recipients of his gifts, it is, nevertheless, he alone that rules over us: it being emphatically and literally by his benignant agency that we have and enjoy every good thing we need, either for the body or the soul, for the present or the future world. Nor should we complain or think unkindly of any one, who may deem it a *sacred* and *indispensable* duty, to undeceive us on a subject, involving so many grave issues, and thus—once for all: as writes the great Twickenham bard,

"Vindicate the ways of God to man."

CHAPTER XIII.

Polygamy considered as a Mormon-Institution, or Religion *retrograding.*

SINGULAR as it may sound to an American ear, *Polygamy* is, nevertheless, an institution common at the present day, among many Oriental nations. Its origin is remote, and may be traced back to the primitive ages and customs of mankind. From its great antiquity and wide observance, it might be inferred after a superficial reflection, that it is simply a compliance with an inherent and deeply-rooted law of our nature, whose wants can be supplied only in this seeming *anomalous* manner, and that, therefore, there is nothing improper in it. But such is, by no means, the case, as will appear hereafter.

Though uncurbed and inordinate passion, indicative of rude, sensuous manners, and a marked proneness to sensual indulgence, has—no doubt, often led to the use of polygamy, such an origin is still comparatively rare—an infraction, now and then, of the decencies of social life, and embraces, at most, only the exceptional or irregular instances in polygamous indulgences. On the contrary, a vain fondness for ostentation, and an

occasional superabundance of women, are the two fruitful and ample sources, which have done more to introduce and perpetuate the *harem-institution*, than any other circumstance or motive, recognizable in the history of our race.

As I have just stated, fondness for ostentatious display; a ludicrous passion for vulgar tinsel; and a childish craving for the evanescent pleasures of the senses, have always been characteristic of a great part of mankind. Numerous servants; a splendid retinue; luxurious furniture; gaudy attire, &c., attest the wealth and denote the taste of the vain voluptuary: pointing out on the one hand the amusements and pursuits that will most gratify him, and indicating on the other, the estimate, which the more sensible portion of society will be likely to form of his worth. When it had once become fashionable to have harems, every one who had the means and the leisure to support such a ridiculous establishment, or the contemptible ambition to emulate his neighbor in so expensive but supposed indispensable an appendage of fancied greatness, would—at almost any sacrifice, have a polygamic institution, and was, therefore, but ill content till his sensuous and puerile craving was satisfied.

Polygamy, on a small scale, is not distinguished by a rigid seclusion of the wives, and the dwelling needs no harem-department to accommodate them. They are less reserved in their manners,

and their freedom has fewer trammels, than is the case with the inmates of the *gynæcium*. That they have occasionally contentions, and are sorely agitated by jealousy, is too self-evident to be doubted. And that the uxorious husband has, hence, frequent and, sometimes, prolonged vexations, notwithstanding his otherwise *superior* polygamic felicity, there can also be no doubt. Alas, that human enjoyment should be so rudely marred!

The occasional superabundance of women—considered as a leading cause of polygamic practices, will, next, demand a cursory notice.—There can be hardly a doubt, that this absurd institution, and laughable method of making a display; of attracting admiration; of flattering the pride, and satiating the carnal propensities of the dissolute, had its origin mainly—if not exclusively, in the fell ravages of war, which—while destroying the men, generally spares the women. These poor creatures—in consequence of such cruel bereavement, find themselves usually in a very deplorable situation. Their natural protectors and friends, alas, have fallen in battle: the unhappy victims of an unholy ambition, or a savage mode of redressing a real or a presumed wrong. Such being the state of affairs, it is often the case that none is left to give them shelter, or provide for their wants: they are—as may be well supposed, not only desolate, but extremely wretched!

Under such untoward circumstances, youth and good looks become dangerous possessions; and these fair, luckless, helpless women, are ruthlessly carried off by the haughty and pitiless conquerors, thenceforth to grace their harems, and to gratify at once their pride and their lust, or, in smaller numbers, find a home in the more humble and less grandly or precisely ordered household.

In further illustration of this engaging subject, it may neither be useless nor quite uninteresting, to learn what views Mohammedans hold in reference to polygamy, considered as a national institution, and a prominent feature in islamism.—A writer, in "Chambers's Encyclopædia," observes that the principal points in relation to polygamy, and upon which all Mohammedans agree, are the following: "Polygamy is allowed, not, as is commonly supposed, without any restriction, but: 'Take in marriage of the women who please you, two, three, or four; but if ye fear that ye cannot act equitably, one; or those whom your right hands have acquired'—that is, your slaves. These are the explicit words of the Koran—IV. 3, so that four wives, and a certain number of concubine slaves, is the whole extent to which a Moslem may legally go. The Prophet's example proves nothing to the contrary, since he was endowed with special privileges, and not subject to the common law in many respects. It is, moreover, added, as an advice, that to marry one or two is

quite sufficient for a man, if he apprehends any inconvenience from a larger number of wives," &c.

Mormon-polygamy differs materially from most polygamic institutions, in being professedly of a religious character. Its founders teach, in substance, that it is a Divine institution, and, consequently, an efficient as well as an entirely orthodox means of grace. It has, moreover, the salient peculiarity that it is purely *voluntary* on the part of the wives: being the result merely of suasion, or simply of moral influence. Hence, should any fair damsel happen to be wooed for the purpose of swelling the devout host of "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," all that she needs do, is to refuse assent to the solicitation, and depart in peace, or yielding compliance, ever after waive the right to complain!

A contributor to the valuable Work, already referred to in the *penult* paragraph of this article, gives a brief but quite adequate history of the polygamic institution among the Mormons; a notice of which, in this place, will serve to convey the necessary information on the subject: "As early as 1838," he remarks, "the Prophet, it is affirmed, had commenced practically to carry out his doctrine of the 'Celestial Marriage,' or of a 'Plurality of Wives;' but it was not till July 1843, that he formally received a revelation on the subject authorizing polygamy."

There can hardly be the shadow of a doubt,

that the Mormons were much influenced by Old-Testament precedents in the inauguration of polygamy among them. Vicious tastes, selfish aims, a fondness for novelty, and love of pomp, &c., would naturally appeal to examples among the "Chosen People," in justification of their extravagant scheme. And it must be owned that such examples of lubricity of manners stand out prominently in the persons—for instance, of Abraham: "the father of the faithful;" of Jacob: a patriarch in Israel, and a man whom God —we are told, "loved;" of David: "the sweet psalmist," and "man after God's own heart;" and, finally—to proceed no further, of Solomon, who was not only a puissant monarch but a great sage; for—according to Scripture, "He was wiser than all men." I will only add, in reference to the last quotation, that if the possession of 700 wives and 300 concubines, is an evidence of a man's wisdom, Solomon certainly enjoyed this precious gift in a very eminent degree!

The Mormons, undoubtedly, laid great stress upon the polygamic practices, recorded in the Old Testament—as signal exemplifications of their contemplated "Celestial-Marriage" system; for they received both the Old and the New Testament as equally divine, only adding to them—as being of equal authority with them, as well as supplementary *to* them, the famous "Book of Mormon," containing—they assert, God's revela-

tions to the New, as the other sacred books contain his divine promulgations to the Old World.

That Mormonism—as a polygamic institution, is flatly at variance with the spirit of the age, and clearly antagonistic to the laws and manners of the United States, there can be no particle of doubt, and it would, hence, be needless to revert to first principles for proof, in a matter that must be patent to all. Besides, it is grossly repugnant to the clear, emphatic ordination of God, in consequence of which, the sexes are made *generally* to be numerically equal, and therefore, the inference necessarily follows that one man and one woman should compose the nuptial relation, or —in other words, that marriage should be *monogamous.* A disregard of the Divine will on this weighty subject, is, of course, *malum in se:* an evil in itself, as well as a flagrant violation of the natural and inalienable rights of all men indiscriminately, and cannot be allowed without doing great injury to our fellow-beings, whose right it must be, since it is plainly their duty, to found families, and perpetuate the race.*

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* The "Perfectionists," or "Bible-Communists," of Oneida County, New York, ignoring both polygamy and monogamy, teach community of sexual intercourse, or—in the language of a writer in "Chambers's Encyclopædia," they inculcate the doctrine of "no appropriation of men and women to one another."

This singular society, in which communism, in its widest sense, exists, traces its origin to John Humphrey Noyes, a

A reference to some of the proof-texts, or *loci classici*, as theologians call them, in favor of monogamy, or one-man and one-woman marriage, will satisfactorily illustrate the unmistakable Gospel-teaching on this important question, and—with the timely aid of an appropriate poetic effusion, bring the present dissertation to a close: Matthew, 19. 4–6; 19. 29; 22. 24–28; Luke, 14. 20; 1 Corinthians, 7. 33; Ephesians, 5. 33; 1 Timothy, 2. 12; 1 Peter, 3. 7, &c. Of these salient passages, the one in Matthew, 19. 4–6, may be justly deemed fundamental and pre-eminently normative of a true sexual relation, and, thus considered, as loudly declarative of the will of the Creator.

The appropriate poetic effusion alluded to, is from Moore's "Lalla Rookh," in which the distinguished author sounds the praises of sweet monogamy against a promiscuous and soulless polygamy:

"There's a bliss beyond all that the minstrel has told,
When two, that are linked in one heavenly tie,
With heart never changing, and brow never cold,
Love on thro' all ills, and love on till they die.
One hour of a passion so sacred is worth
Whole ages of heartless and wandering bliss:
And oh! if there be an Elysium on earth,
It is this—it is this!"

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native of Brattleborough, Vermont, and is less than a half a century old. I will only add, *inquiringly*, can St. Paul's admonition: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," be legitimately applied to the Oneida-Institution?

APPENDIX.

A Singular Plant-Metamorphosis, or Evolution Seemingly Verified.

A REMARKABLE plant sprang up *spontaneously* last summer, in the court-yard of the writer, and was presumed by all who saw it, to be a stunted specimen of *Zea maize*, or Indian corn. Its height was about fourteen inches; its circumference measured an inch and a quarter; while its leaves, which had the *declinated* curve of the *corn*-leaf, were from twelve to fifteen inches in length, and between one and two inches broad. The fruit, which was enclosed in a thin, several-leaved husk—as is characteristic of this cereal, was supposed to contain a *nubbin*, or imperfect ear of corn. To secure it against injury from impending frost, the plant was transferred into the house, when its heterogeneous growth soon became evident; for when—in a week or ten days, the *dissilient* husk had laid bare the fruit, it was found to resemble—not an ear of corn, but an ear of wheat or barley, about two inches and a half in length, and about an inch in diameter, bearing grains of the yellowish-green color of coffee, of the size of small, irregularly-shaped lentil-seeds, each armed

with a stiff awn, at least an inch and a half long. The seeds—in botanical phraseology, were *naked*, and formed around a *rachis*, like the grains in the ears of wheat or barley. In place of staminate flowers—as in Indian-corn, and commonly called *tassels*, the ear terminated in several spicular prolongations, which evidently implied an *aborted* male-inflorescence.

Such—as nearly as I can recollect: the plant having been probably months ago lost on its way to a distinguished scientist, is briefly the history and appearance of this wonderful *lusus naturæ*. My apology for noticing it in this place, is—without further delay, to invite the attention of the Public to a subject at once curious and full of scientific significance.

Thus nature too has her *mysteries*, and verifies the teachings of England's great poet, when he writes:

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."—SHAKESPEARE.

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